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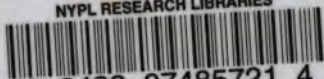
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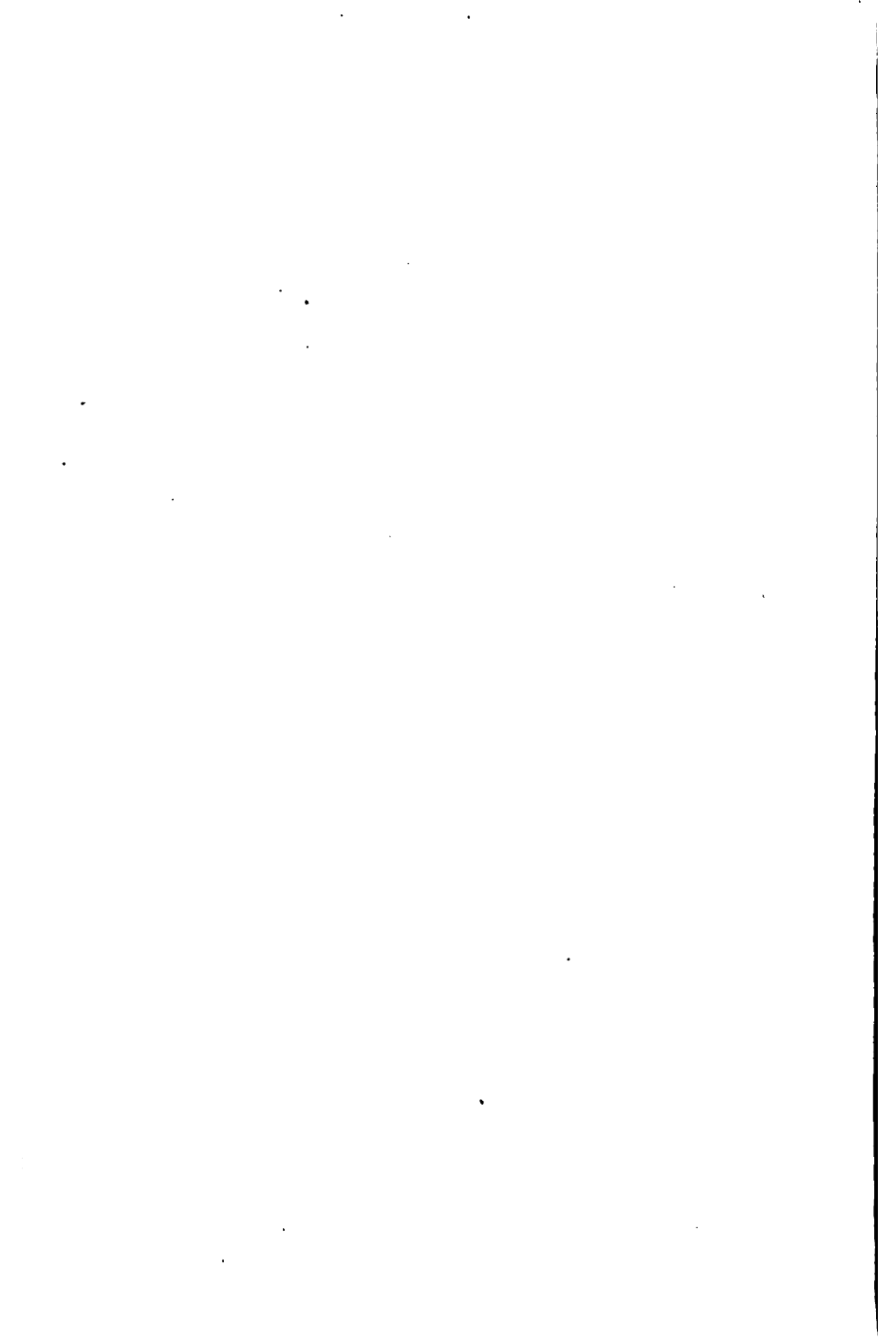


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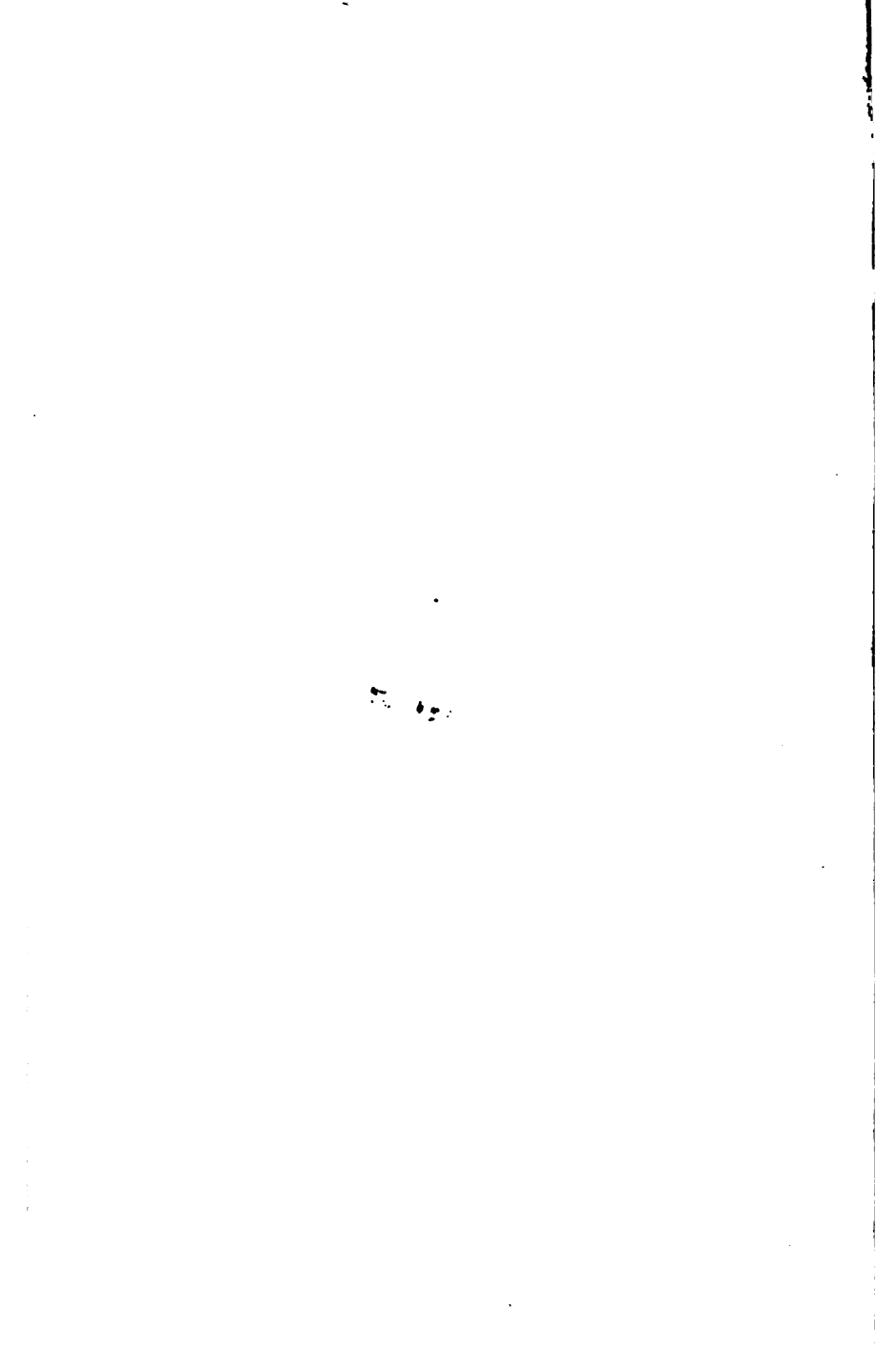


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ON



# **I S A A C S**

**SOME CHAPTERS IN THE  
LIFE OF DAVID ISAACS,  
GENERAL MERCHANT**



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**SWEAR TO ANYTHINK, AND SWEAR AT ANYTHINK, IF THE BUSINESS PAYS WELL  
ENOUGH; I ANSWERS**

# ISAACS

SOME CHAPTERS IN THE LIFE OF  
DAVID ISAACS, GENERAL MERCHANT

BY  
JOSEPH  
GEE

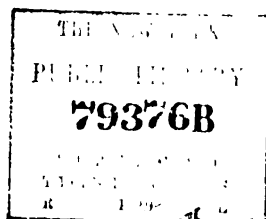


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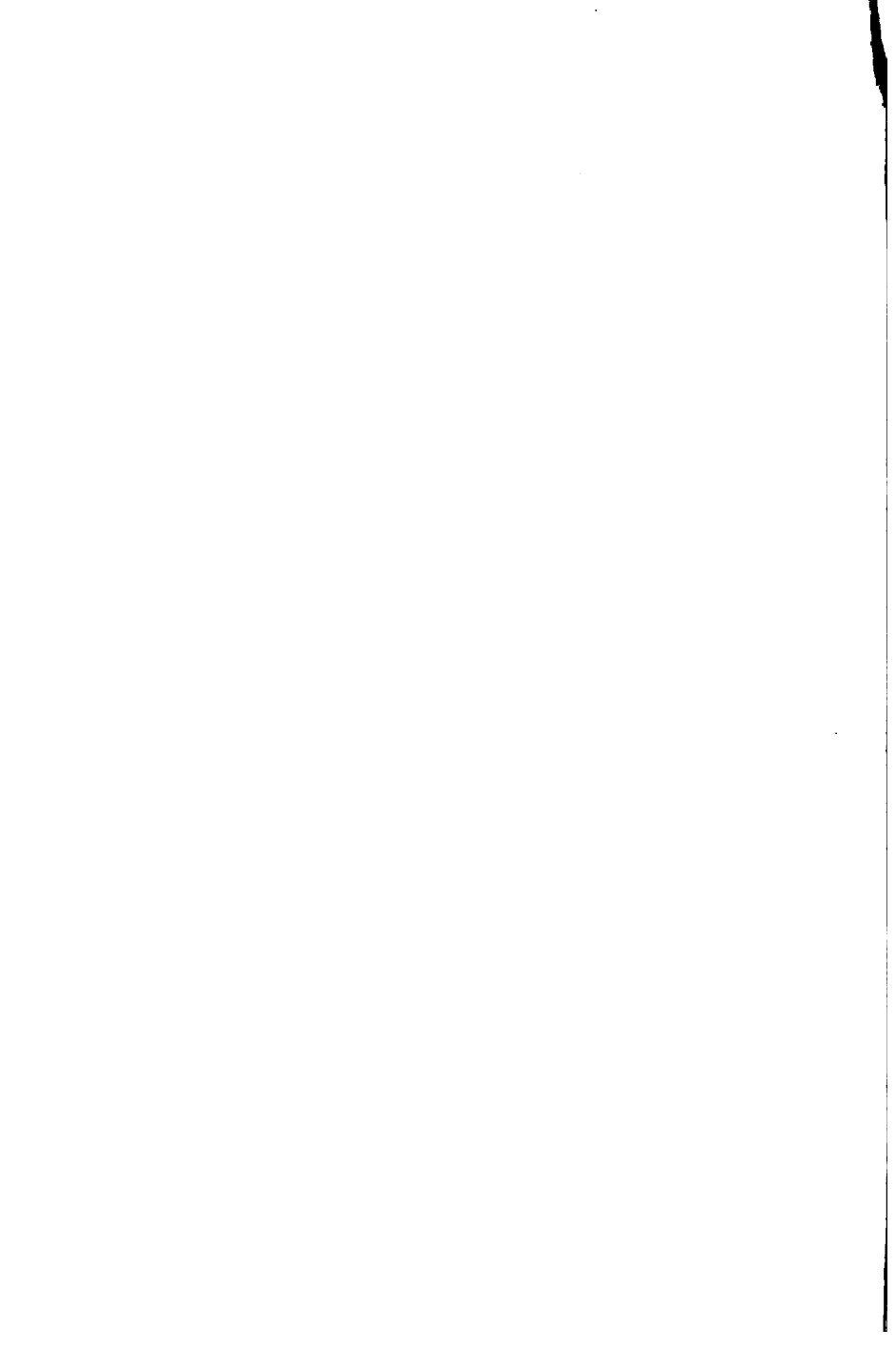


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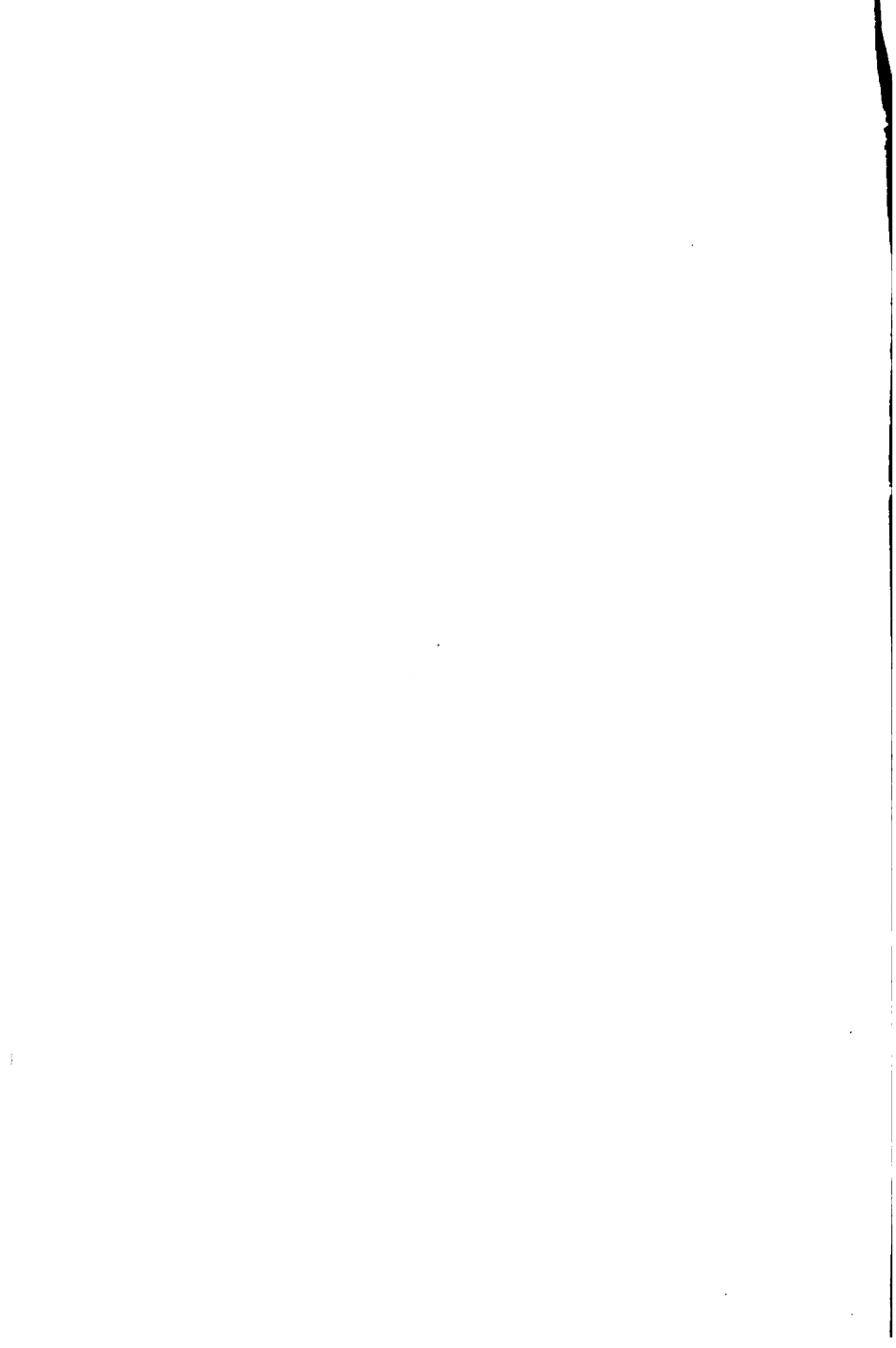
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TO  
MY FRIEND  
COUNT HAMON



# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. I MEET ISAACS - - -	9
II. CAMOUFLAGE - - -	16
III. LENNENBERG'S CHEESES - -	22
IV. SCOOPALL LEWIS: PHILANTHROPIST -	32
V. A QUESTION OF IDENTITY - -	48
VI. COCK O' THE NORTH - - -	58
VII. ISAACS ON THE YIDDEN - - -	75
VIII. CHEVOLSKI'S FIRE - - -	84
IX. MR. AND MRS. LION RECEIVE - -	100
X. ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER - -	116
XI. ISAACS IN DIFFICULTIES - - -	136
XII. A DEAL IN "CABBAGE" - - -	153
XIII. RUTH STRELINSKI'S RAFFLE - -	167
XIV. A SECRET SERVICE ADVENTURE -	186
XV. A GAME OF BLUFF - - -	205
XVI. ISAACS: IMPRESARIO - - -	219
XVII. THE CONVERSION OF HUNG FO -	244
XVIII. A TRAM ACCIDENT - - -	261
XIX. A DEAL IN ARMY BOOTS - - -	275
XX. ISAACS IN LOVE - - -	286
XXI. RUTH - - -	302



# ISAACS

## CHAPTER I

### I MEET ISAACS

**I** HAD six minutes in which to catch the last train out from Broad Street to my home in the suburbs. I was at the Bank of England; therefore "hurry" was the word. At the corner of Broad and Liverpool Streets a boy was calling "late edition." I gave him a penny, snatched the paper, and just managed to hop into a carriage as the train was moving from the platform.

On opening the newspaper I found, to my annoyance, instead of a late edition, it was marked "4.30," which meant it had been printed about three o'clock—a habit the London newspaper people have of trying to make the public believe how very up-to-date they are. Having already seen this edition, I threw it aside, determined to watch for the boy who had sold it to me.

The boy I had bought it from I had noticed, even in my haste, was of a pronounced Semitic type, with a thin face and very bright eyes. I was annoyed with myself, not for missing the latest news of the day—that, after all, was of no consequence; but that I, a police-court lawyer, had been so easily victimised. I called to mind being tricked once before, when, after buying a box of



matches, I discovered the contents had all been used.

In my youthful days I had also been caught by the bird trick in the soft goods neighbourhood of the city. I happened to be walking down Aldermanbury, and heard a voice saying close behind me: "You go away, I won't sell it yer. You don't look as if you 'ad a kind 'eart."

I turned round and saw a young man, obviously a warehouse-packer. In his hand was a canary, and directly he caught my eye, he said: "I like birds, and found this canary in Love Lane. It must 'ave escaped from a cage, 'cause it was so frightened, it let me pick it up in my 'and. I wouldn't sell it to no one, only I 'aven't got a cage to put it in, and even if I 'ad, our cat'd frighten it to death."

"Well, then, sell it to me," said a man who was following him.

"No, I won't. You look like one o' them bird-fanciers what treats little birds cruel to make 'em sing. I don't like yer face, and I won't sell it to yer. Not if you offered me a pound for it, so there. I'd rather give it away—almost—to a gentleman wiv a kind 'eart, who'd be good to it."

I had never possessed a bird of any sort in my life and, feeling a sudden desire to own one, I asked the finder of the bird what a cage would cost.

"I'll get yer a lovely one for six-and-six, and that wiv four-and-six for the canary, makes eleven shillin's," he said.

I gave him the address of the office where I was employed, and during the afternoon he brought the cage with the bird in it.



Of course I had bought a painted sparrow. The merchant who sold it doubtless traded every day in the same article, watching for young fools like me.

The incident of the newspaper had passed from my mind, when, one night, taking shelter in the doorway of an office building, I became conscious that a dispute was taking place further along the passage. The voices were those of two boys. One was saying to the other:

"I got more brains than you; give it to me. Let me do it."

"No," said the other. "I found it, and you ain't got no rights to a share at all. It's mine. . . ."

"Oh, ain't I, though? I saw it soon as you, only you picked it up quicker'n me, that's all."

The lucky finder did not appear to be impressed with the argument.

"I'm goin' to keep it and watch the papers for a reward," he said.

"There you are!" said the other, who was evidently the elder, "and very likely get took up for pinchin' it. I know them rewards! Besides, if you give it to me, I know where to take it to get a good price, see?"

"Yus, but 'ow do I know I'm goin' to get my fair share?" the younger asked, his determination somewhat wavering.

"Can't you trust yer brother, Sully?" pleaded the elder.

"No, Dave, I can't," came the quick reply. "I've always come awf second best wiv you, even in the matches and papers."

The mention of matches and papers aroused my interest.

"Well, ain't I older than you? Don't that entitle me to more? And didn't I think of the idea of the papers?" the elder boy asked with swift speech and ready tongue.

"Well, what'll yer do wiv it if I give it yer to 'andle?" the younger boy asked, half ready to be swayed by the other.

"I know the place to sell it, I tell yer . . . no risk. And," he said impressively, "I'll give yer a fair 'alf, I will, straight."

"No extra profit to you 'cause you sold it, mind. No 'fairies' as to why you should 'ave more than 'alf?" Sully said suspiciously.

"No, on my solemn word, and 'ere's a tanner on account. I deal fair, and you know it. See the risk I'm takin'? You've got something, anyway, and if it ain't gold, I've lost my money, ain't I?" And he pushed a sixpenny piece into the hands of his brother.

The boy called "Sully," tempted by the ready cash, gave up the article he had found, and then I called them. They both rushed at me, each jostling and pushing the other so as to be able to claim me as his particular victim or client, as circumstances might order.

I chose the elder, recognising him as the boy who had cheated me on the newspaper "lay," and said, "Run and buy me an evening paper—a *Standard*."

"Give us yer money, then," he said.

"I'll pay you when you bring it," I told him.

He dashed off, and was back in a minute, and I gave him threepence—twopence clear profit for a minute's work. Seeing which, the younger at once claimed half, taking not the slightest notice of me as he argued his point.

"Garn!" shouted the one called "Dave" as he glared at his brother. "Didn't the gent choose me? You 'ave got a sauce! And didn't yer try to get 'im, shovin' me out o' the way?"

"Then give me back the bracelet," demanded Sully, feeling aggrieved at what he considered unfair treatment.

"Ain't I paid yer a tanner on account, eh? What more d'yer want?" Dave asked, in a threatening tone.

I told them to stop squabbling, and they at once began to push each other about again, thinking there was a further commission in the air.

For the purpose of inspiring confidence, and to make peace, I gave Sully twopence, asking Dave if he sold papers at night.

"Sometimes papers, sometimes matches. Matches pays better," he replied, eyeing me sideways with the look of a suspicious dog who isn't quite sure whether he is to receive blows or bones. Then he asked:

"You ain't a 'tec,' are you? No, of course you ain't, else you'd 'ave 'ad the bracelet my brother found, before this. Besides, you 'aven't got 'copper' wrote all over yer, like what they 'ave."

I told him as impressively as I could that his brother ought to take the bracelet to the nearest police-station, a suggestion he received with the profoundest scorn.

"Yus, I don't think!" he said. "And one o' them coppers takin' it 'ome to their wives! We found it——"

"I found it," his brother interposed ineffectively.

"We found it, so it's our property. Like to see you takin' it to the police-station, if you'd come across it," he added, casting upon me eyes of great doubt.

He had not the smallest compunction in impeaching my honesty, making it obvious that in his eyes the morals of all men and boys were on the same level as his own.

"What do you mean by selling me an early edition of the *Standard* at twelve o'clock at night?" I asked him.

Probably thinking I was going to demand the return of my penny, he said indignantly:

"Who're you gettin' at"? And then, as an afterthought, he added: "And if I did, didn't you never make a mistake in the dark?"

I explained that I wasn't in the least angry, but only wanted to know if it was a regular business or not. When he appreciated the fact that I was not going to reclaim anything from him, he became confidential.

"We often get a gent to give us 'is old paper when 'e's buyin' a later edition," he said. "And when it's late and a man comes along in a 'urry, or 'as 'ad a drop to drink, we pass the old one awf on 'im, see?"

Adding argument to fact, he went on: "If a man ain't got time to see what 'e's buyin', serve 'im right if 'e gets a wrong 'un; if 'e's 'ad too

much booze, it don't matter what yer gives 'im, 'cause 'e won't read it, anyway, see?"

His look indicated that if I could answer the argument he had put forward, I should be a much cleverer man than he gave me credit for being.

I was pleased to have solved the mystery, if not satisfied with the reasons given, and the rain having ceased, I left them, not, however, before Dave had cajoled a cigarette from me, which, having lit, he graciously permitted his young brother to have a "draw" now and then.

And that was the beginning of my acquaintance with the brothers Isaacs, with the elder of whom I became more closely associated at a later date, in the capacity of his legal adviser on a charge of pilfering. My success in obtaining his discharge he never forgot.

## CHAPTER II

### CAMOUFLAGE

**W**HEN I was acting for Isaacs in the little difficulty in which he had become involved I learned a great deal about his character and heard many of his views on life. As a client he was difficult. He seemed incapable of saying "Yes" or "No," unaccompanied by a stream of modifying phrases.

I enquired his full name.

"Isaacs," he replied with some asperity and suspicion, "and a very fine old name, too, for it goes back to—to—well, ever so far."

"Never mind about that," I said. "I want your Chris—your first name, please."

"Stanley Hamilton Gordon Isaacs," he answered with dignity.

"Are you joking?" I asked. "In law we treat things seriously."

I hoped he would see the rebuke in my tone.

"One day I shall drop the 'Isaacs', see?" he answered, "and that'll take the shine out of a lot of 'em who was born within 'alf a mile o' White-chapel Church—or lived there, at any rate—and 'ave since got to Park Lane via Highbury and 'Ampstead. And them wiv the newest, funniest names you ever 'eard; especially when you meet 'em face to face. Why, I know a family in May-fair, name o' Souza de Natoni; what the 'de' means, I *don't* know. They kept a fried-fish shop

in Commercial Road. Ask 'em to-day where it is, and they'll look at yer and say they never 'eard o' the place. Then there's the——"

"Please give me your real name," I said rather sharply.

"David," he said surlily.

"Any other?" I asked.

"Ezekiel," he added, almost angrily, as he turned quickly on his seat and faced me. "There's a name to be given a man by 'is father. Enough to 'andicap any chap in the race for a livin'. Why couldn't 'e call me 'Montagu?'—sounds swell, that does. Do you wonder at people with a name like 'Appleblossom' changin' it? I don't. Appleblossom! And when you see the owner with 'is thick lips, pressed-out nose, and a tongue too large for 'is mouth, it makes yer laugh. No; give me 'Stanley Hamilton Gordon Isaacs,' and, later on, without the 'Isaacs.' "

"I thought you were proud of the name of 'Isaacs,' " I ventured.

"So I am," he replied; adding acidly, a moment after, "but I shouldn't weep if I never 'eard it again."

"When I hear you talk in this strain, Isaacs, you remind me of what Kipling says, that the 'East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.' "

"That shows 'ow little 'e knows. If 'e 'ad mixed wiv the Yidden 'e'd 'ave wrote, 'East is West and West is East, and ever the twain *must* meet.' "

I asked Isaacs to explain.

He regarded me with a look of condescension as if pitying me for my ignorance.



"Why! It's as easy as spottin' a schlenter (imitation) diamond. As I said before, don't they all start in the East—near Whitechapel, and don't they work round, gradual like, to the West—say, Maida Vale? And when them as 'as worked round to the West, goes for a walk down Piccadilly, don't they met their old friends who 'ave come for a walk in the West, and try not to catch their eye? Ain't that the East meetin' the West? If not, I'd like to know what is. You tell that to your friend, and 'e'll see 'e's made a bloomer."

"Are you an English-born subject?" I asked.

"I was"—he hesitated, then continued, "before conscription come in. Now, I'm a Russian." After a pause he added: "Before the war, I was so English, if the King come down our way, I cheered, same as I would if you'd saved me from gao—from trouble."

I pretended not to have noticed the correction.

"Since conscription come in," he continued, "I'm Russian, like my father."

He took his hat from his knees, raised it above his head, and gave it a little twirl.

"Three cheers for the revolution, and freedom of—well, trade," he finished, rather lamely.

"But why have you changed your nationality? I thought English Jews were proud of being English," I said.

"Oh, did yer? Well, you wouldn't be so proud when the officer comes round to see your exemption card, and you ain't got one. Not 'alf! Me a soldier! Fancy puttin' a man like me in khaki! With my tradin' abilities! And the pay, one-and-

two a day, mind! One-and-two!" He raised his closed hand until it was level with his face, and lifted quickly, first one finger, then two. "And me makin'——"

"How much do you earn?" I asked, accentuating the last word.

"Earnin' and makin's the same thing," he said with conviction.

"I don't agree," I replied. "One earns money by the sweat of the brow——"

"Sweat o' the brow!" he exclaimed. "Some o' the money I've got 'old of, before I've touched it, 'as made me as wet as comin' out of a swimmin' bath, believe me. Not that I've ever been in one," he admitted, shuddering, somewhat, at the thought.

"About the army," I said, drawing him back to the subject in hand.

"Well, if it 'adn't been for my ole dad—'e's in the tailorin' and second-'and clothin', yer know——"

I didn't, but nodded, so as not to interrupt him.

"—Oh, 'e's no ninny, mark *my* words," he continued, with pride. "When the orficer come round to my father's 'ouse, I 'appened to be there. I sometimes pop in, 'specially of a Friday, when a tasty bit o' fish is goin'. My father no sooner saw 'im, than 'e looked at me, sayin' 'Be meshugger.' 'Meshugger' 's Yiddish for dotty," he explained.

"I tumbled quicker than a female when 'er bloke's nipped before 'er eyes, and commenced to yabber a lot o' Yiddish I knew.

"This your son?" 'e asked, lookin' at my dad.

'Dat vos my poor unfortunate boy,' ses the old 'un, noddin' 'is 'ead and wavin' 'is 'ands as if the brokers was on the premises. Then, tappin' 'is 'ead wiv 'is fingers, 'e looks at the orficer, and ses, 'Understand?'

The orficer looked at 'im, and then at me, and I offered 'im a piece o' sugar.

'You see, Mr. Orficer, 'e thinks you're a canary, don't you, my poor boy?' 'e ses, givin' me the tip.

'What's 'e sayin'? asks the orficer, as I commenced to talk a lot o' foreign lingo I'd learnt at the Free School, though if yer give me a 'underd quid, I couldn't tell yer the meanin' of it.

'E ses you're a lion, and wants you to eat der sugar,' ses the old man, pattin' me on the shoulder.

'No, 'e didn't,' ses the orficer, quick as a flash.

'Yes, 'e did,' ses the old 'un, very indignant 'is word shouldn't be took. 'Say it again, my poor boy, and let the gentleman 'ear,' 'e ses, in a wheedlin' way, like you talks to a little child.

I tried to say it again as I said it first, but changed it about, I suppose, 'cause I didn't remember what I'd said exact. The orficer looks at my father with a very cold eye.

'I speak Yiddish, myself,' 'e ses, 'and you'll be arrested to-morrow, for concealin'——'

'Concealin'!' my old dad ses, glarin' at the orficer. 'D'you take me for a fence? I'll summons you! 'Ow dare you!' 'E 'adn't understood properly; thought the orficer was accusin' 'im of 'idin' somethin' 'e oughtn't to 'ave bought.

'—of concealin', or endeavourin' to conceal one of His Majesty's subjects from the due perform-

ance of 'is military duties. As for you,' 'e ses, lookin' at me very nasty, 'you come with me.' And 'e took me awf to prison.

"It was all right though; my father swore I was born in Russia, and was brought 'ere when six years old. I don't think they believed 'im, 'cause they 'ad me examined by the doctor, who stripped me, punched me, and put a thing like a trumpet to my chest and 'eart. When they brought me back into the room they reported I was no good—'a waster' they called me—insultin' blackguards! But I was discharged and free.

"All the same, I'm Russian till the war's over, in case o' further trouble. Only don't talk to me in the lingo, 'cause I don't understand a word of it. English is good enough for me, so long as I don't 'ave to wear khaki, which don't suit my complexion."

And he stroked his small moustache with supreme self-satisfaction.

## CHAPTER III

### LENNENBERG'S CHEESES

**I**SAACS had called to see me in relation to a little matter of saccharine, concerning which one of his friends was in trouble with His Majesty's Customs, and on whose behalf he was desirous of engaging my professional services.

He looked more worried than usual; his eyes slightly more "ferrety"; the lines on his forehead, which were far too deeply marked for so young a man, had the appearance of the painted wrinkles of the actor. His finger-nails (never a pretty sight) had been recently bitten down still deeper, for the red of the flesh had not had time to become dirt-grimed. Apart from the expression of anxiety, his morning toilet bore strong evidence of neglect.

"What is the trouble, Isaacs?" I asked.

"I got a cousin in 'Olland," he began. "I call 'im a cousin, though 'e's the son of my mother's brother-in-law; let's say, a relation. 'E's like me, a general merchant. 'E wrote askin' if I could do a trade in saccharin'. I didn't know what the stuff was, so I spoke to a friend——"

"The one under arrest?" I asked.

"That's 'im," Isaacs replied. "Most unfortunate. 'E told me 'e knew all about it. 'For sweetenin' things,' 'e ses, and tryin' to be funny, 'e goes on, sayin' as 'e was very fond o' saccharin', and 'ad a very sweet tooth 'when it's cheap,' 'e

ses, rollin' 'is tongue round 'is sloppy mouth. 'When it's cheap,' 'e ses again, lookin' at me artful. Then 'e explains 'ow the duty's very 'eavy, and the stuff must be shipped careful like. So we talks it over, and I arranged that 'e should write to my cousin, and say that I 'ad given 'is name as a shipper o' Dutch cheese, and order twenty-four cheeses to be shipped in a case, as 'e wanted to make them a present to a 'orspital in London, and so on."

"I don't understand the connection between cheese and saccharine," I interrupted.

"I shall never make you a business man," Isaacs complained in an injured tone. "Why, you cut the cheeses in 'alf, scoop out the cheese, and put the saccharin' inside in proper packin'; then wrop the cheeses in silver paper, pack 'em in a box, and declare them to the Customs 'Ouse people as cheeses. This is a free-food country, ain't it? Cheeses comes in duty free, see? Then we sell the saccharin'—the duty's awful 'igh on that—at a trifle lower than the market price to friends o' mine, and pocket the merchant's profit."

"But why do you want a middle-man in the deal? Don't you have to share the profit with him?" I asked.

"Certainly I do," he answered with a wink. "I ain't a greedy man, and always share with a pardner. 'Onesty's the best policy, I ses."

I had heard that proverb from Isaacs' lips many times.

"I ain't got a warehouse—not a cheese warehouse, anyway," he went on, "and I feel safer

with a pardner. I don't know anythink about cheese, or bills-o'-ladin', or dock dues, or duties, and so I told 'im. 'You do the business,' I ses, 'and we go 'alves. Your part is to get the goods over: mine is to sell 'em and get the money. I've got a fence—I mean, a friend, who'll buy the lot and pay down the cash for 'em, see?' So 'e did it, just as I planned it for 'im."

"And then the trouble began, I suppose," I remarked.

"Things went fine for a start," he replied. "The order was sent on a proper form for the twenty-four cheeses at the lowest price, and Lennenberg got back a letter thankin' 'im for 'is trial order, which showed my cousin understood the wheeze, and very soon, over comes the goods. I saw Lennenberg the day the bill-o'-ladin' arrived, and 'e chuckles as 'e looked 'em over.

'That's fine,' 'e ses, larfin' and rubbin' 'is 'ands together as if they was cold. 'We'll 'ave the goods in the warehouse in two days. I'll go and clear 'em myself.'

I told 'im 'e was a fool, an' that we'd better employ a respectable agent—a gentile. 'Don't you go, for goodness' sake,' I said.

'What d'you mean?' 'e asks indignant. 'Why should we employ an agent? Agents are thieves; they run up all sorts o' charges they don't pay.'

'Never mind,' I told 'im. 'Take my advice, now; 'ave an English agent; they won't suspect 'im, same as they will you.'

'English agent!' 'e shouted. 'Ain't I English? Or nearly. And when I put on my frock-coat and silk 'at, same as I wear at Shool, they won't know I ain't a born Englander.'

'E wouldn't be persuaded by me, try as I would. Why is it," Isaacs asked plaintively, "that pardners won't listen to the one who knows 'ow to manage affairs? Why will they be so pig-headed? I'm a born organiser, I am, and if I'd passed for the army and they'd put me in the givin' out of the contracts department, look at the money I could 'ave made—'em." The last word was clearly an afterthought. "'Pon my word, when this trouble's over, I think I'll try to get passed for the army, if they'll put me in the buyin' orfice."

Reverting to the case under review, he continued:

"So down 'e goes to the docks to clear the goods 'imself, and me wiv 'im.

Of course the Customs orficer asked 'im what was in the cases.

'Cheeses,' ses Lennenberg, 'and there's the copy of the order I sent wiv 'em, 'e adds, as 'e pulls out of 'is pocket some papers to show the orficer.

'We don't want to see the order,' ses the man wiv the badge on 'is cap, lookin' at 'em all the same. 'All we want to know is if the goods is dutiable or not.'

'Cheeses ain't dutiable, are they?' Lennenberg asks, very innocent, thinkin' to deceive the orficer.

'Ain't you imported cheese before?' ses the orficer, lookin' at 'im very old-fashioned like.

'Oh, often. I've got Dutch blood in me,' ses Lennenberg.

'And Dutch cheese, too,' ses the orficer, gettin' a little further away from 'im.

'But I'm more English than Dutch, now,' ses Lennenberg, 'opin' to make a good impression.



'I should say so,' ses the orficer, not too nice. 'You're about as English as them cheeses, and as Dutch as a German sausage. 'Ere, Bill!' 'e calls to one of 'is men, 'open this case.'

'Oh, don't open it, Mr. Orficer, please,' ses the old fool, givin' 'imself dead away. 'Air's so bad for cheeses and makes it go awf colour.'

'Don't you believe it,' ses the man. 'You must be thinkin' o' Limburger, not Dutch. Besides it won't matter if they lose a shade or two; p'raps they'll fetch a 'igher price 'cause of their delicate shade. You ought to know that, bein' Dutch—in parts,' lookin' at Lennenberg wiv a twinkle in 'is eye—only Lennenberg didn't seem to see the joke.

As the case was bein' opened, Lennenberg, whose face 'ad gone the colour of an oyster, began to lose all interest in the cheeses, and commenced a-edgin' slowly towards the gate, admirin' the shippin' as 'e went, 'is step gettin' a bit quicker the further awf 'e got.

'Ere, 'old 'ard a moment,' calls the man wiv the badge, in a tone that I didn't like, believe me. Lennenberg said afterwards, that when 'e 'eard the voice 'e felt as if 'is blood 'ad turned to vinegar. 'E told the orficer 'e'd be back in a moment; 'e was just goin' to a pub to get a little brandy, as 'e'd come over faint like.

'I'm not surprised,' ses the orficer. 'Your cheeses are very much awf shade, as you feared. So much so, they've gone to nothin' in the middle, or else the maggots 'ave turned themselves into little parcels wropped in paper.'

When 'e saw the game was up, Lennenberg's face turned green and yellor, and it was more than

'e could manage to keep 'is 'ands from tremblin'. 'E couldn't speak for a moment, and then 'e ses: 'It must be a mistake on the part of the shipper, and I shall write 'im severe about it.'

Smellin' danger, I thought it time to look after myself, so I turns on 'im very indignant, sayin':

'Ow dare you ask me to come and 'elp you to do your business: to clear cheeses when for all I know they've got port wine in them packages!' And I asked the orficer, very innocent, what it was in the little packages.

'No, not port, something more sugary than port: it's a sweetenin' stuff used for feedin' innocent babies, and is imported by other innocent babies, like 'im.' 'E jerked 'is finger towards Lennenberg.

Lennenberg walked up and down like a bear in a cage, sayin' 'e was never more surprised in 'is life, and couldn't offer any explanation of the wicked act of the shipper, tryin' to get an 'onest man into trouble.

'P'raps so,' ses the bloke wiv 'Customs' on 'is cap, 'but as far as I'm concerned, you can tell that to the Marines, or the Magistrate, I should say.' And 'e tells 'is man to call a constable.

When Lennenberg 'eard this, 'is face went from green and yeller to a deep violet, and made 'im think quicker than a pickpocket drops a purse when 'e feels 'is arm gripped. Foolish like, 'e went from bad to worse by offerin' the man five shillin's. *Five shillin's!*' Isaacs repeated with scorn, shooting his hands and arms toward me as if in supplication, "to save 'underds and 'underds of pounds worth of goods. 'That's for you, if you say nothin' about this little matter,' 'e ses to the

orlicer, smilin' 'is greasy smile at 'im as if 'e was goin' to kiss 'im.

'Pass that on to the 'orspital you was goin' to give the cheeses to,' 'e ses, remembering the letter Lennenberg 'ad shown 'im which 'e'd sent with the order. 'We don't do that sort o' business 'ere, whatever you may do Commercial Road way.' "

"Well, what do you want me to do?" I asked.

"I want you to defend Lennenberg. I promised 'is wife I'd do the best I could, and if 'e ain't got much of a case, I can't 'elp it, can I? But the thing is, 'ow can we get 'old of the stuff?" And he spoke with deep feeling, looking at me hopefully, as if I kept an Aladdin's lamp on hand for such jobs.

"With the facts you have put before me, I shouldn't care to take up the case," I replied. "I might be struck off the rolls——"

"That ain't of no consequence," he said, with a wave of the hand; "there's good money in this, and it's 'alves wiv you if you can show me the way. You needn't be known in it," he said, perfectly convinced the promise of reward would alleviate any scruples I had.

"You'd better go to Mr. Blank," I continued, ignoring his suggestion, "and don't tell him anything. Let Lennenberg explain his own case."

As he got up to go, I could see by the droop of his shoulders and the limpness of his gait, that Isaacs felt he had wasted his time, and was under the impression that I had not treated him quite fairly.

"Let me know how you get on," I said, as he was leaving, but he only grunted something I couldn't catch as he went.

Some weeks after, he turned up on one of my slack mornings, so I decided to see him, if only to gain experience of a mentality I was vaguely beginning to understand.

"Well, what can I do for you?" I said, as he entered smiling, and giving me the impression that things had "panned out" well for him, as his chirpy manner showed.

"Come to pay your account," he replied. "You know, the other affair, not the saccharine one."

Isaacs always paid me promptly, probably for reasons of his own.

"How did the case finish?" I asked.

"Oh, that! I didn't do so bad out of it after all."

"Do you mean to say you got possession of the saccharine?" I asked.

"No, the Government pinched the lot, though I offered them a good price for it. And they fined poor old Lennenberg three times the duty, too. Broke 'im, I'm afraid," Isaacs replied, but without any great sorrow in his voice.

"Then how did you do well?" I asked, wondering by what trick he'd succeeded in making a profit.

"Oh, I saw your lawyer pal. Never said a word about you. Went as a stranger. As 'e didn't know me, 'e said 'e must ask for a cheque on account. Very unreasonable, I thought. But there you are—all lawyers are thieves—not you, I don't mean," he added.

"'Ow much?' I asks. 'Make it low,' I ses, 'for times are 'ard for respectable merchants.'

What made 'im laugh, I can't think, but 'e did.

'Ten pounds,' 'e demanded. Ten pounds, mind you, for a little bit o' business like this!"

Isaacs paused, his eyes turned upon me as if in expectation that I should agree the charge was outrageous.

As I remained silent, he resumed:

"I said I'd call to-morrow and went straight awf to Mrs. Lennenberg, who was upset terrible at 'er 'usband's trouble.

She was soapin' the face of one of 'er kids when I got into the room and left the lather there while she railed against me and the Government something shocking.

I explained that if Lennenberg 'ad only done as I wanted 'im, there would 'ave been no trouble, and by the time I'd finished, she saw it wasn't my fault, which of course it wasn't, as you know."

"I pass no opinion," I said.

"You know I'm right, though," he persisted.

"I know your mind is so formed, as to be quite beyond that of the ordinary man."

He took this for a compliment, and smiled.

"When I got 'er into a reasonable frame of mind," he continued, "I said the case was goin' to be very expensive to fight, the lawyers' charges would be terrible 'eavy, and there was counsel to be engaged, as the Government was determined to put a stop to this sort of thing, and so on, till I came to the point of the amount of cash wanted to defend old Len.

Seein' the effect I 'ad made on 'er, I asked for a 'underd pounds, though when I started I meant to ask for fifty, but I got so carried away by my own talkin', I doubled it. Besides, I knew she'd 'aggle, so made allowances, see?"

"Did she give it you?" I asked.

"Thought she'd faint at first, so I went on drawin' 'er a picture of 'im in gaol for the rest of 'is nacheral, until she'd calmed down a bit, when she commenced to bargain. She bargained so much, she worried me—besides, I felt sorry for 'er, so I let 'er awf wiv fifty, sayin' I would do the best I could wiv such a little. I shouldn't 'ave done it, though, if it 'adn't a-been for 'er daughter, who I once thought o' marryin', only the old man wouldn't spring enough."

Having exhausted himself, Isaacs now came back to the object of his call, and asked again, "'Ow much do I owe you?"

I told him, and when the transaction was finished, he laughed and said, "I paid that shark of a lawyer 'is tenner and cleared forty of the best; and I 'ope it'll teach that Lennenberg a lesson. I will never trade wiv 'im again, I give you *my* word."

"That will be hard luck for Lennenberg," I ventured.

"'Arder luck for me," he said, with that cunning smile which always showed his face in its worst light as he lit a cigarette and put on his hat to go. "You don't find customers like 'im every day. So long."

## CHAPTER IV

### SCOOPALL LEWIS: PHILANTHROPIST

**I** MET Isaacs as he was coming out of a building in the Mile End Road, which, though I had passed many times, I had hardly observed, possibly because it had no prominent sign on the windows or walls. I noticed that his face, which was usually sallow, was warmer in tone, while his eyes and general expression bore traces of recent excitement.

As he bumped into me, I said, "Hullo, Isaacs, don't knock me over, please."

"Knock *you* over! I've knocked *them* over, upstairs, and come out quick, before Scoopall 'ad a chance o' gettin' it back. I'm no glutton, *I ain't*, and anybody can 'ave a look in, after I've 'ad my turn," he replied, as he pulled his felt hat, which had evidently been put on in a hurry, further forward on his head, and walked beside me.

"You might be talking Hebrew, for all I understand," I said. "Do you mind enlightening me? Because when I listen to you, I always learn something——"

"Of course yer do. Ain't I——"

"—If it's only what to avoid," I went on.

He halted, and said with simulated annoyance:

"'Ere, if you're goin' to start insultin' me, I shan't give yer the pleasure of my company." And he made as if to turn back.

"Come for a stroll, and get your nerves calmed

down," I said, taking him by the arm and commencing to walk. "You can teach me your ideas of philosophy . . . anything. Now, what did you mean by having knocked them 'upstairs,' and whom did you 'knock'?"

"I been playin' 'shermang der fair,' " he commenced. "And done old Scoopall in for ten lovely sovereigns. I *never* feel so loyal as when I see the King's 'ead on somebody else's money which 'as found its way into my 'and," he said, jingling some coins in his pocket.

"Is it a club, then?" I asked, nodding my head backwards.

"Don't yer know the 'Buster and 'Ooker' Club? Straight, between friends, didn't you ever 'ear of it?" he questioned me, watching my face to see if I answered him truthfully.

"I have not. Nor do I know what you mean by 'Buster and 'Ooker.' Or is it 'Hooker'?" I said.

"'Ooker' wiv a aitch," he replied. Then he went on:

"A 'buster's' a burglar, and a 'ooker's' a pick-pocket. Lord! You are green! Sometimes, I wish you was my client, instead of me bein' yours. You would be soft pickin's," he said, smiling at me.

"But why is such a title given to the club?" I asked.

"'Cause all the members is in one profession or the other," he replied. "It's run by Scoopall Lewis. Not that 'is name is Scoopall; only 'e's called it by the members 'cause it fits 'im good and proper. 'E started the club so as gents in the same line o' trade could meet quiet, and talk over their business. For instance. Say a place in the



West End is to be 'busted' which 'as been found by a man. 'E can't do it on 'is own; 'e must 'ave a pardner; p'raps two. Well, they meet there and lay out plans, see?"

"I see," I replied; and desiring to learn more of this interesting establishment, I added, "But I'm surprised you should belong to such a place, Isaacs."

"Surprised!" he said. "Why? Ain't we entitled to our little comforts like the toffs in the West 'ave at their clubs?"

"Certainly," I replied. "But is it so comfortable?"

"Rather," he said with emphasis. "Only it's laid out different. 'As to be. It's known as 'The Mile End Workin' Men's Social and Democratic Society,' and is supposed to 'ave to do wiv politics and votes andceterer. You can see the small brass plate on the side o' the door any time yer pass. That's the blind, but——"

"What is it like inside?"

"Oh, the first floor's laid out as a lounge, wiv papers to read. On the walls Scoopall puts up notices o' meetin's to do wiv alterin' the rates and taxes, to make it look all right. There's a little orfice at the far end wiv 'Secretary' wrote on the door, where Scoopall does up 'is books. Next floor up, there's a dinin'-room and a bar, managed by a relation o' Scoopall's. On the top is where we play at 'shermang der fair,' and 'roulette' and dominoes, and cards. 'Course there's a bar, too, booze bein' profitable, I s'pose. Then——"

"That all?" I asked, seeing he paused as if about to say something and changing his mind.

"That's all," he said. Then after further hesitation, he added: "I'll tell you, only you must take yer dyin' oath never to give it away."

I ignored the latter injunction and said, "Well?"

"There's a secret staircase which Scoopall 'ad built by a member who was once in the buildin' line. Very useful in case the p'lice 'appened to come after some one they wanted. You get to it from every floor through a slidin' panel which opens by pressin' a certain spot on the wall. The rule is that yer finger what presses the place must be covered wiv a 'andkerchief, so as not to make a dirty mark. It leads down into a court behind the buildin'. The door in the court looks as if it was fastened by an old padlock which 'adn't been opened for years, but if yer look at it close, you'll see the screws of the 'asp on the side of the door don't go into the wood at all. It's only fastened when the club is shut, and that ain't often. A man 'as only to shove it if 'e's on the outside, and 'e can get in; or, pull it to get out. Very useful, I tell yer, sometimes, when the cops are after yer."

Thinking he had said too much, he added very impressively: "Now yer know, and if you ever give me away and Scoopall knew it was me as told yer, 'e'd squeeze the liver out o' me."

"Mr. Scoopall seems to be a useful kind of person to know," I remarked.

"Very useful, I tell yer," Isaacs said with that firmness of diction which comes of knowledge. "Very useful, indeed. Good at advisin' which is the best pardner for a particular job; then 'e 'as to be told o' times and dates so as to be ready to take charge o' swag, and arrange to get rid of it,

either 'ere or in—foreign parts. Why, sometimes, when an extra good parcel 'as been—collected, 'e's on 'is way to—wherever 'e goes, before the police 'ave 'ad the matter reported.

'E's a very artful man is Scoopall. Leads a double life. Nothing wrong, I don't mean. Far from it, 'cause 'e's a good 'usband, I know. And a good sort in other ways, as I can show yer.

Down 'ere 'e's in one line o' business; up in the city 'e 'as another.

Always at the club, though, at nights. For reasons.

Say, a gent 'as something to sell urgent; Scoopall's on the spot to oblige. Not only that. 'E's a sport, and willin' to take a risk.

S'pose yer know of a big 'ouse what's askin' for trouble—and some of 'em, by the way they leave windows open, almost beg yer to favour 'em wiv a visit—and you're short o' funds to tip friends in the 'ouse who're willin' to lend a 'and in makin' things easy—leavin' a catch undone, or a door on the jar. That 'as to be paid for in advance. So Scoopall comes in and takes a 'and in the game, see?"

"One might call him an advance agent," I said, indulging in a little pleasantry, which Isaacs ignored.

"I've known 'im—I mean, I've 'eard," he went on, "put up as much as a 'underd quid on a extra special piece o' business. Oh, 'e's a sport, right enough, though a bit 'ard when it comes to buyin' the stuff.

Then s'pose you've 'ad a run o' bad luck through no fault of yer own; 'ad to leave awf work in the

middle, and make a bolt empty 'anded. Or yer may 'ave been caught wiv the goods on yer, and got the 'jug' accordin'. Nacherally when yer come out, you want something better to eat than the rotten grub the Government gives to its—clients; also, a pound or two in yer pocket comes 'andy. Who do yer go to? Why Scoopall, o' course."

"Should I be far wrong in describing your friend Scoopall as a common 'fence'?" I asked with assumed simplicity.

"Common!" he said, by no means accepting the description. "Don't you let 'im 'ear yer say that. I give yer my word when Scoopall's dressed up in 'is top 'at, 'is frock-coat wiv a flower in the lapel, 'is patent leather boots shinin' brighter than Eckstein's bald 'ead; if you met 'im in 'Atton Garden—the precious stone market, yer know—you couldn't tell 'im from a respectable—I mean—a regular diamond merchant. I call 'im a general merchant, same as myself, only in a different branch. You call 'im a 'fence.' You say a man who's done 'time' is a criminal; I call 'im an 'unfortunate.' We've all got our names for things, ain't we?"

I was able to find myself in complete accord with him for once.

"Certainly, we have," I said. "The man I describe as a pickpocket you call a 'hooker.' Quite right. Go ahead."

"What I like about the club is that you can 'ave a flutter at these fancy French games, like 'shermang der fair,' if yer feel that way inclined. No need to go to Boolong and leave yer cash wiv them polite Frenchies. No wonder they're polite; I'd be if a lot o' fools'd patronise me," he said.

"The French politeness is natural, Isaacs, and costs them nothing," I corrected him.

"No, but it costs the foreigners a bit, though," he said, retaining his opinion.

"Oh, people do win large sums, sometimes," I persisted.

"I know they do. About as often as the punters do on the racecourse. That's why the poor 'bookie' rides in a Rolls-Royce, while the backer goes to 'is work on a bus. I wish the Government'd allow the French games in England. I'd take the Albert 'All; and that wouldn't be big enough to 'old the mugs who'd roll up."

"You'd never fill it, Isaacs," I said. "It holds seven thousand people."

"Wouldn't I?" he replied with conviction. "D'you know what an American in my line o' business once said to me? 'E said, 'we ought never to be slack, 'cause there's a "sucker" born every minute o' the day.' Think o' that!" he exclaimed. "And you say I'd never fill it!"

The term "sucker" was unknown to me. I asked its meaning. He looked at me and laughed as he replied:

"*You* are, or would be, if you wasn't my lawyer. 'Sucker's' the Yankee name for a mug, o' course."

Then, calculating aloud the possible number of "suckers" waiting somewhere for him, he said, when he had added up the total:

"Fourteen 'underd and forty fools a day! All grown up, or growin' up, ready to patronise me! All workin' 'ard, or comin' into money, to pay brainy men like me to learn 'em experience!"

"Isaacs, my friend," I said, "we started at the

'Buster and Hooker' Club, and in five minutes you've whisked me over to France, and back to the West End. Now come to Scoopall; he should be an interesting man to meet. You must introduce me to him."

He declined to entertain the suggestion.

"I couldn't interduce *you*," he said very firmly. "You're a lawyer, and the very name's enough to give 'im cold sweats at night. Scoopall's like them little animals what work underground—very bashful. Shy as a gal on the stage wearin' tights for the first time. Thinks the whole 'ouse is starin' at 'er. Don't understand that until she's about forty, and playin' leadin' parts, she might as well be in a coal 'ole."

"I suppose he's a 'warm' man?" I asked.

"Ought to be, considerin' 'e gets the money of the members all ways; sells 'em grub, buys their goods, and gives 'em tables to gamble on, and 'im the banker. Warm!" he said, wrinkling his brows. "'Ot, I should say. 'Ot as the criminal court when the inspector's readin' out a list o' previous convictions."

"Ah! Now I see the meaning of his name," I ejaculated.

"Blimey! You *are* smart!" he replied sarcastically. "Smart as the bloke what lost 'is pearl pin, and didn't find it out till 'e got 'ome, and was undressin' to go to bed."

"Now, Isaacs, you've gone too far," I said, thinking I had caught him. "I can understand you knowing when the pin was——"

"Lost," he interpolated.

"—Lost," I said, accepting his word. "But

when you say he only discovered the loss when he went to bed, that must be imagination on your part."

"Oh, must it! I 'appen to know the gent who found it. 'E keeps company wiv the parlour-maid at the very 'ouse, and she 'eard the man tellin' 'is wife about it at breakfast. There now!"

He stopped to look at me with the same expression as a prize-fighter might at an opponent he has knocked out.

"One to you, Isaacs," I admitted. "Only I still don't understand. Was she an accomplice of his?"

"'E met 'er at 'er last place when 'e was sellin' sewin'-machines on time payment. Fell in love wiv 'er, and took 'er out, educatin' 'er gradual to 'is real line. They was to be married out o' the proceeds of 'is next 'aul, but 'e got copped leavin' the 'ouse."

"I suppose, one of these days, Isaacs, you'll be caught, too,—I mean by one of the other sex—and settle down as a docile and obedient husband," I said.

"Don't you believe it," he said emphatically. "'Ere, what was we talkin' about?"

"You were telling me of Scoopall Lewis, and the 'Buster and Hooker' Club," I said, to switch his mercurial mind back to the original subject.

"Oh, yes,—Scoopall," he went on. "'E keeps an orfice in 'Atton Garden, and trades under the name of Groubenheim & Co. in the diamond business. Down the Mile End Road 'e's a clean-shaved bald-'eaded man of, say, fifty. See 'im in 'is orfice as Groubenheim, and yer wouldn't know 'im. 'E

wears a dark wig, and a moustache; don't look a day older than thirty-five. 'E's well known on the 'Arwich-Rotterdam boats as bein' in the diamond trade. Always 'as a private cabin when 'e crosses, 'cause 'e often 'as on 'im goods worth a pot o' money——"

"Why don't they do as I do, I wonder," I remarked. "I carry my money in a pocket inside my waistcoat."

At which he laughed.

"I knew that long ago," he said to my surprise. "You wasn't aware of it, o' course. Practised on you one day for amusement. But where d'you think a stone dealer carries 'is goods?"

I confessed I hadn't an idea.

"I'll tell yer, only don't let on. 'E 'as pockets put on the inside of 'is undervests, underneath the arm-pits, and from the time 'e starts on a journey, to the time 'e arrives, 'e never takes it off. Good scheme?" he asked, looking at me artfully.

"Excellent," I confessed. "But, tell me, what does Scoopall want with an office in Hatton Garden? Does he really trade in precious stones?"

"Only as a blind," Isaacs replied. "Keeps books and a typist, all regular. Yer see, it all 'elps 'im to move about easy between England and 'Olland on 'is real business. Which is necessary. I'll tell yer a true story. Took place soon after I started for myself, bein' sick o' tailorin'."

"Would that be somewhere near the time I first appeared for you on a small charge of 'hooking'?" I asked.

"That's right. Lord! wasn't that a bit o' luck?" he commenced, ready with his nimble wits to dart off, like a dragon fly, to a new episode.



"Cut that out, Isaacs," I said. "We've travelled a long way since then. Get to the yarn."

"About Sam Goldstone; all right. At the time I'm speakin' of, Sam was a widower wiv a daughter about sixteen. 'E doated on this gal, and lived in mortal dread that one day she'd find out 'ow 'e made 'is livin'. 'E lived quiet and respectable over the water, and went to business every mornin' to deceive 'er. Said 'e was in the printin' trade to account for 'is bein' away from 'ome sometimes at nights.

Things 'adn't been good for some time, and money bein' tight, 'e went to Scoopall to borrow a bit to go on wiv.

Scoopall, as I said, is a good sort, and willin' to 'elp a chap over when 'ard up.

Then Goldstone got on to a good lay wiv the aid of a pal, and made a wonderful 'aul which 'e took to Scoopall in double quick time. Got a 'underd quid from 'im as 'is first share, and Scoopall was in Amsterdam almost before the police was advised.

Unfortunate for Sam, 'is finger prints was known, and two days after 'e was nabbed in Cheap-side.

The money 'e'd got from Scoopall was in the safe deposit, so 'e wasn't worried over that. What did worry 'im, though, was 'is daughter, and while 'e was under remand 'e couldn't make up 'is mind what to do.

'E daresn't write to Scoopall—the rule bein' never to give the buyer away—and 'e couldn't write to his gal 'cause 'e didn't want 'er to know 'is proper trade. And 'e couldn't get money to 'er 'cause of the police openin' all letters. So 'e was terrible worried for fear she might starve or

—she might—anyway, 'e was almost broke up wiv worry.

When 'e'd been in trouble before, Sam 'ad always given a false name, so 'e felt glad the papers couldn't give 'im away to 'er, even if she read the police reports. 'E got three years; three long years wivout smoke or drink. Nothin' but cell, work, exercise and sleep, wiv a lot o' wakefulness thrown in, and plenty o' thinkin' as makeweight. Lord! What a lot o' thinkin' you can do in one hour! You'd believe you'd be fed up wiv any one subject in an hour, wouldn't yer? But if it's a gal—the one you've got, or the one you want—she'll stick in yer 'ead, whether you're pickin' oakum, or cleanin' out yer cell: whether you're walkin' behind the others in the exercise yard, or layin' on the plank they call a bed. And night's the worst of all, 'cause you can see 'er in the dark, and you can't shut 'er out whether yer eyes are open or shut.

Work and worry made Sam a bit thinner by the time 'e was free, and when 'e come out o' the prison door, 'e sprinted like a two-year-old in 'is 'urry to see 'is gal, but when 'e was 'alfway there, 'e got off the bus remembering 'e 'adn't made up a yarn to account for 'is long absence. The longer 'e thought, the 'arder 'e found it to make up a tale likely to go down, so at last 'e made up 'is mind to tell 'er the truth and chance 'is luck about what 'appened.

At last 'e got to the road where 'e lived, and found a ' To Let ' notice board in the front garden. When 'e saw this, 'e told me 'e felt as if 'e 'adn't got a stomach; p'raps 'e was a bit weak for want o' decent grub.

Then 'e went by a roundabout way to the club—where you met me—to see if Scoopall knew anything of 'er, makin' up 'is mind that if Scoopall 'adn't looked after 'er while 'e was put away, things'd go bad for 'im. Scoopall's face wouldn't be a face after 'e'd done wiv 'im, and more than that, 'e'd give 'im away to the police.

At the club they told 'im Scoopall wasn't there, so 'e made up 'is mind to go to 'Atton Garden, and although it was a rule no one should go there, 'e was so mad to find out about 'is gal, bein' burnin' up wiv fever to find out where she was, 'e broke the rule, and met Scoopall outside the door of 'is orfice.

'Want to see you urgent,' 'e said to Scoopall, lookin' at 'im, man to man.

Scoopall was mad wiv rage that 'is rules should be broke.

'What the 'ell d'you mean by comin' 'ere?' Scoopall said to 'im as they went into the orfice by the side door. 'Don't you know this is my private place, and I don't allow——'

Sam looks at 'im fierce and says:

'You don't allow! You listen to me. I've come to see what's 'appened to my gal while I've been away. My 'ouse is shut up, and I'm 'ere to see if you've looked after 'er. My Gawd, if you 'aven't!——'

Scoopall lost all 'is temper at Sam breakin' the rules, bein' a father 'imself.

'She's all right,' 'e ses. 'D'you think I desert my pals in trouble? You shall see 'er, but first——'

'Is she like what she was before I was put away? That's what I want to know.'

And Scoopall understood what 'e meant.

‘She’s all right,’ ‘e ses, ‘but let me tell yer——’

‘Where is she then?’ Sam ses, beginnin’ to get nasty again.

‘Listen to me,’ ses Scoopall. ‘She’s never been told what ’appened, and I want to put you wise before you meet as to what you’re to say. When you was took, I sent for ’er and told ’er I’d ’ad to send you away on a secret business; so secret, that not a soul must know where you’d gone to. She begged so ’ard, I told ’er you’d gone to South Africa on a new diamond business I was interested in, and which was goin’ to make both our fortunes. Then she asked me ’ow long you’d be away. I couldn’t tell ’er three years; the poor kid would ’ave been broke up. So I said not more than a twelvemonth or p’raps longer. When a year ’ad gone, I said things was goin’ fine, and that when you came ’ome you’d be so rich as to surprise ’er. And so the time went by, and when she asked me I made more excuses, until the time was gettin’ short, see? That’s the story you’ve got to pitch. So don’t forget. Diamonds, South Africa, understand?’

‘But didn’t she ever ask if I’d sent a message?’ Sam asked, wonderin’ what ’is gal must ’ave thought of ’im not ’avin’ wrote to ’er once.

‘’F course she did, and I used to make up all sorts o’ yarns as to what you was doin’ and the lovin’ messages you sent. It was a long time before she settled down, but at last she got used to things. It was only yesterday she asked if I’d ’eard from you, and I told ’er you was on your way ’ome, and might be ’ere any minute. I’d watched the time, you see, Sam. Now don’t forget. Diamonds, South Africa.’

As 'e spoke, 'e touched a bell under 'is desk, and a gal came in. She looked at Scoopall, and then at Sam. Then she looked at Sam very 'ard, and callin' out 'Father!' she was in 'is arms bein' squeezed so tight she could 'ardly breathe.

Sam said 'e 'ad to 'old 'er like that 'cause 'e didn't want 'er to know 'e was wettin' 'er 'air wiv 'is tears.

'There 'e is, my dear,' Scoopall ses, gettin' up to leave the room. 'Ome again from 'is travels, and a rich man, as I promised yer. So you won't 'ave to do any more type-writin' for me or any one else. I'll be back in ten minutes, Sam,' 'e ses, and left 'em to themselves.

Sam 'ad the best ten minutes 'e'd 'ad for three years.

She told 'im 'ow Scoopall 'ad took charge of 'er and 'ad placed 'er wiv a nice family to live wiv, 'im payin' everything. And so as she should 'ave something to do, 'e'd 'ad 'er taught type-writin' and brought 'er to 'is orfice to 'elp pass the time while 'er father was away. When Scoopall come back they was both as 'appy as they could be, larfin' and talkin' together.

Scoopall asked 'er to leave 'im and 'er father together a minute, and as she walked out of the room, she went up to 'im and gave 'im such a kiss on the face, that 'e nearly blushed.

When they was alone, Sam gripped Scoopall by the 'and. 'Scoopall,' 'e ses, 'I don't know what to say, except you're one of the very best Gawd ever made, and if you ever want a pal, call on me, 'cause I'm dam'd if I can tell yer 'ow I feel.'

And 'e nearly broke down again.

'That's all right, Sam,' ses Scoopall, forgettin'

Sam was nearly punchin' 'im a few minutes ago. 'I just wanted to let yer know that your share in that last little deal is three thousand pounds. So's it shouldn't lay idle while you was away, I invested it for yer,' 'e said; and goin' to a safe, 'e took out some papers which 'e passed over to Sam. 'You'll find close on four 'undred pound in that envelope, which is the interest on the money, after takin' off the 'underd I gave you on account. So now you'll be able to give up business altogether, and settle down in a nice little 'ome wi Susie, if you'd like.'

And Sam, when 'e told me, said it sounded so much like a play, that 'e broke down again, so that when 'is daughter come into the room, she asked 'im what 'e was cryin' for."

"Is that really a true story, Isaacs?" I asked, finding it difficult to believe.

"Every blessed word. What's more, if Scoopall knew I'd told yer, 'e'd punch my 'ead for givin' 'im away," Isaacs replied.

"Whatever for?" I asked. "I should have thought he would have been proud to have such a story known."

"I dunno why. P'raps 'e's ashamed of 'avin' acted against all business principles," Isaacs replied.

"But his act displayed principles of the highest order," I protested.

"May be," said Isaacs. Then half turning to me, he said in a cynical tone: "You go into the City of London, and ask what they think."

And as he left, I began to wonder if he was near or far from the truth.

## CHAPTER V

### A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

I HAD heard from Isaacs that he was calling with "a lady friend" on business. Therefore, when a Mrs. Striglitch was announced, I had her shown into my room, concluding that Isaacs would arrive shortly.

Mrs. Striglitch was a short, panting woman whose dress was so tightly stretched over her corsets as to be in imminent danger of bursting; its seams at the waist already showed the stitching. She was so short that when she stood she gave the impression of being seated, and when seated she, at first glance, appeared to be standing. She sat close to the edge of the chair to enable her feet to reach the ground.

During the time she was in my room, Mrs. Striglitch was continually wiping from her face a moisture that seemed to accumulate with amazing rapidity.

With her was an emaciated youth who might have been any age. In physique he was so poorly developed that to credit him with fifteen years would have been flattery; only the fact that he shaved would have enabled any one to guess him at twenty. His sunken eyes and hollow cheeks proclaimed him unhealthy, while his high, round shoulders testified to difficulty in breathing.

"My son," Mrs. Striglitch said, looking from me to the youth as she sidled to the edge of a chair.

I bowed and said "Good morning." He merely glanced at me without speaking.

"I suppose you've 'eard of me," she said, giving her face a wipe over with a dubious handkerchief.

I regretted I had not that honour.

"What!" she exclaimed. "Never 'eard o' 'Striglitch's 'At Shop'?"

I was constrained humbly to admit the fact.

"Then you don't know much about London, that's a cert," she said; and, perceiving by my silence that she had me tied up in the cords of ignorance, she continued: "Ask any gal—or, for that matter, any young man within three miles of Whitechapel Church, if they know 'Striglitch's,' and I'll wager they say at once, 'What, the 'At Shop?' Mark my words now!"

"Did you come to see me about hats, madam?" I asked, with the object of getting to business.

"Good Lord, no!" she said, taking out the handkerchief once more. "But all the same, if ever you want a nice, noo, fashionable 'at for your young lady, or two or three fine ostrich feathers—genuine ones, mind you, no imitations—come to me, and you'll 'ave the best that money can buy, for cash or on time payment. As low as sixpence a week. There now!"

She looked at me and smiled in her most engaging manner, and again I asked her what was the business on which she had called to see me.

"It's about insurance," she said. "Mr. Isaacs, who's a friend o' mine, told me you knew all about it, so I've come to get you to insure my son 'ere."

She turned to him as she spoke.

"Izzy, 'old yerself up, dear, and don't lollop about so, there's a good boy."



"Izzy" awakened out of his trance, and straightened himself, only to let his head sink on to his chest a moment after.

At this point Isaacs was shown in. He entered without taking any notice of either Mrs. Strigitch or her son. With a wink at me as he put his hat down on a chair, he said: "Couldn't get 'ere before; 'ad important business on 'and. 'Ow're yer gettin' on?"

"I was just going to explain to this lady that I don't act as an insurance agent," I said.

"Don't yer?" he asked, his eyes seeking a framed notice board of an insurance company hanging on the wall. He then beckoned the lady and her son to the outer office, and on his return I explained, at his request, what was necessary to be done in the case of a person who was to be insured by others, and also gave him some information regarding the question of premiums.

"'Ow long d'yer 'ave to go on payin'?" he asked.

"Until the person insured is deceased," I answered.

"Diseased!" he exclaimed. "But suppose 'e's diseased when you insure 'im?"

"You haven't understood me, Isaacs. You have to go on paying until the insured person is dead," I explained.

"Oh," he said.

"Unless you choose to insure him for a term——"

"Any time?" he interrupted.

"Certainly," I replied. "Five, ten, fifteen years; any time you like to specify."

"What about six months?" he asked.

"No difficulty," I said. Then deeming it necessary to give him a word of advice, I added: "But if you're thinking of insuring that young man who has just left the room, I fancy you'll not find it easy. I don't believe any company would accept him. He looks to me to be in a galloping——"

"Never you mind about 'im," he said, looking at me fiercely. Then shrugging his shoulders, he added: "If I can't, I can't; but there's no law against tryin', is there?"

"None that I know of, Isaacs. Only I shall be very surprised if you succeed," I said.

"There's one thing very sure," he said. "If I don't try, I can't succeed, can I?"

"That's true," I had to admit.

"Right-o!" he said, rising to go. "I'm off to 'ave a shot. I'll let yer know 'ow I get on."

And as he left me, I had the feeling that even Mr. Isaacs, with all his ingenuity, would fail in this case.

To my surprise, I received a post-card from him one morning, on which was written:

"I. S. insured. Your name give as reference.—D. I."

This annoyed me very much, and I wrote at once expressing myself in strong terms that he should have used my name in any way.

A few days after, I had another card from him, saying:

"Your name took off.—Yours truly, D. I."

I began to wonder how he had managed to get so unhealthy a specimen of humanity insured, and

came to the conclusion that either a very heavy premium had been paid, or that my judgment was wrong as to the health of young Striglitch.

In due course, the matter was revived again, by Isaacs turning up one morning, wearing a mourning hat-band and a black tie.

"I've come to see yer wiv sad news," he said. "Very sad. Mrs. Striglitch is outside."

"What is there sad about that?" I asked, not comprehending. "Is she ill?"

"No," he said, "she's all right. It's 'er son. 'E's dead."

"Not that young man who was here with her some time ago?" I asked.

"That's 'im. Snuffed it."

"I'm sorry," I said, using the conventional phrase.

"So should I be, only, yer see, I stand in wiv the insurance money."

"You do!" I exclaimed. "How?"

"It's like this," Isaacs replied. "I told 'er a long while ago she ought to get 'im insured, and at last she followed my advice. She's all right in 'ats and feathers, and lendin' factory gals money at a penny a week interest in the shillin'; but when it comes to real biz, she wants a man like me about 'er. So when she decided to do it, I promised to 'elp 'er—on conditions. One was, that I was to give 'er the benefit of my knowledge of such things, and the other was that if I showed 'er 'qw to get 'er son insured, she was to give me twenty per cent. of the money she got from the insurance people, if 'e died."

"And you managed it, I remember," I said,

curious to know how, since my original idea of the boy's health had proved correct.

"Rather!" he answered, getting up and walking slowly up and down the room. "I told yer there's nothing like tryin'."

Pausing in his promenade, he came and stood over my desk and added: "Mind you tell 'er when she comes in, I ought to 'ave 'alf the insurance money, seein' 'ow clever I managed it."

Stopping in my search for a document I had mislaid, I turned to say I could not interfere in agreements already made. "A bargain's a bargain," I said.

He went to the door, opened it, and in an off-hand manner, beckoned her into the room, merely saying, "Come in, 'e can see yer now."

Mrs. Striglitch was in deep mourning, and when she took a seat, she used her handkerchief for the double purpose of wiping the grease from her face and the tears from her eyes.

"My poor Izzy's gone, sir," she said, as she put her hand into her bag, bringing out a bundle of documents, somewhat crumpled and dingy in appearance.

"You remember Izzy," she continued. "Nice-lookin' boy, dark, curly 'air. Like mine when I was young."

"Yes, I remember him, Mrs. Striglitch," I said, as consolingly as possible.

"Ah, 'e was a good boy," she was going on, but Isaacs cut her short by saying curtly: "Never mind all that." Then turning to me, he said: "We've come to ask you to collect the insurance money."

He took the papers from her and gave them to me. They consisted of an insurance policy for two hundred and fifty pounds, some correspondence, and a death certificate.

When they had gone, I wrote to the insurance company stating the facts as I knew them, and made application for the amount. The reply of the company was to the effect that there were circumstances relating to this particular insurance which would require investigation before payment could be made.

Isaacs came to see me in answer to my intimation of the company's attitude. He was burning with indignation against what he termed "swindlers who take yer money, and then try to get out o' payin'."

"Do you know all the facts of the case?" I asked him, desirous of getting to the root of the affair before taking further action.

"Of course I do," he replied with conviction. "Didn't I tell 'er what to do?"

"Did you go with Mrs. Striglitch to the office?"

"Only as far as the door. No further. Not me. I'm an adviser in this sort o' business, and keep in the dark, so's there can't be nothink against me, if things don't go just so," he replied, with a crafty smile.

"Perhaps I'd better go and see what's in the mind of the company," I suggested.

He jumped at the idea.

"Do," he said. "And tell 'em Mrs. Striglitch don't mean to stand any nonsense. They got to pay, and pay quick. Quicker the better, if they don't want trouble."

"I'm afraid, Isaacs, it's not much use talking in that strain to a rich insurance company," I said, "and you may as well understand that if there's been—anything not as it should be, not only will they refuse to pay, but other and more serious consequences may follow."

This remark made him look very serious, and I could see he was thinking hard. Suddenly he rose as if he had remembered an appointment for which he was late.

"I'm off now," he said. "I must 'ave a talk wiv Mrs. S."

When he had gone, I went to see the insurance people, who told me they were not at all satisfied at the early death of young Striglitch. They had seen the death certificate of the youth, and had consulted the doctor who attended him. The young man they had passed was a really strong healthy subject, and for him to die of consumption in so short a time was a practical impossibility. Therefore they did not intend to pay, and were seriously considering a prosecution.

With these facts in my possession, I sent for Isaacs.

He came into the room with a hang-dog look on his face; I could see he felt deception or guile would not further serve his purpose with me.

"Isaacs," I said, "how would you like to be prosecuted for fraud? How——"

"Fraud! Me! I 'ad nothin' to do wiv it. They can't touch me!" he said, with agitation in his voice.

"What has nothing to do with you?" I asked, feeling the facts were now about to emerge.

"Why sendin' 'er nephew to be examined, instead of 'er son."

"But who suggested this to Mrs. Striglitch? You don't expect me to believe the idea emanated from her, do you?"

He shot his hands out towards me.

"She said she wanted to insure 'er son, Israel Striglitch, and I told 'er after what you said to me about 'is 'ealth, the company'd never pass 'im. Then it struck me she 'ad a nephew of the same name, and I said to 'er, innercent like, 'Now, if you wanted to insure the life of your nephew it'd be easy, 'cause 'e's as strong as a bullock,' and the wicked woman went and done it.

She told 'im she was goin' to insure 'is life as a present to 'im. Nice sort o' present, 'pon my sam! Fat lot o' good bein' worth two 'underd and fifty quid *after* you're dead, ain't it? So she sent 'im up to see the doctor, which 'e did, and was passed A.1. I saw 'im yesterday, and 'e told me that when 'e signed the paper they give 'im, 'e saw a mistake 'ad been made. 'E told 'em that the lady who was insurin' 'im was 'is aunt and not 'is mother. And that's what give the show away, I expect. Silly fool! Why can't people learn that sometimes talkin's a crime?" he said, looking at me as if he had suffered a great injustice.

"Mrs. Striglitch may think herself lucky if the company doesn't prosecute her, Isaacs; anyway, they'll never pay; of that you may be quite certain——"

"That's what I thought when I saw you last time," he said, smiling at me, "and so I made another bargain with her——"

"Another bargain!" I interrupted him. "What is it this time?"

"Why, I let 'er off cheaper than ever. I told 'er when I got 'er into the street after leavin' your orfice, that you said you thought I ought to be satisfied wiv thirty pound—not fifty, as arranged—and I said, generous like, as I was 'ard up, if she'd plank it down on the nail, I'd do it, 'er bein' an old friend——"

"And did she?" I asked.

"You bet! Reckoned she was makin' twenty quid right awf. Took me straight 'ome and parted up in them new one-pound notes, which ain't pretty, but useful, if you've got enough of 'em," he answered in a satisfied manner.

"But now you know she won't get her money from the insurance people, I suppose you'll return her the money," I said, not believing for a moment he had any such intention.

"Oh, you do, do yer?" he asked with a sneer in his tone. "Well, when you know a bit more about the East End Yidden, them foolish thoughts won't come into yer 'ead. Tol lol. I'm off to a matinee wiv the barmaid of 'The Ducks and Drakes,'" he said, going off quickly before I had time to suggest he ought to make the refund.



## CHAPTER VI

### COCK O' THE NORTH

**I**T was a warm afternoon in June. Having finished work, I was making a few notes for the next day preparatory to taking a 'bus to the West End for a breath of fresh air in the Park, when my chief clerk, aged fifteen, announced "Mr. Isaacs."

"Come in," I said; "I'm just off."

"Well, that's cool!" he said, in a hurt tone. After regarding me with a reproachful gaze, he continued: "'Come in; I'm awf!'" he quoted. "Like sayin', 'Ere's yer 'at! What's yer 'urry!' Makes it cool enough to shut awf the electric fan."

"It's so stuffy in this room, Isaacs, I'm going up West to sit under the trees in Hyde Park, and get a cup of tea," I explained.

"Sit under the trees!" he exclaimed, chewing over the idea, which seemed strange to him. Having absorbed it, he said: "Do you know, come to think of it, I've never sat under a tree that I can remember! Funny, ain't it? Not my style, I s'pose." He hesitated a few moments, then said rather nervously, as if wondering how I should take it: "S'pose I go wiv yer; I'd rather like to try it."

"Come by all means," I invited him, and off we started.

On the 'bus, some people, obviously provincials, were talking in broad dialect. Isaacs listened to

them for a time, then turned to me and said in a half whisper:

"Funny 'ow some people talk, ain't it? I can't 'ardly understand what they're sayin', can you?"

"I'm not trying," I said, not being particularly interested.

"I should say they're Scotch, wouldn't you?" he presently said.

Isaacs is not a restful companion.

"I really don't know, Isaacs," I replied, a little petulantly. My irritability left him quite unmoved.

"If they are, I don't like 'em," he added.

"Well, that doesn't matter to them," I said. He turned to me with a measure of antagonism in his voice.

"No, but it might," he said. "If I took a fancy to 'em, I might offer to show 'em round town a bit. Sort o' guide, yer know. Same as I did the other day. Another Scotchman. Tell yer when we get awf."

He relapsed into silence, at which I was relieved, as conversation on 'buses is distasteful to me. During tea, it was plain, by the way his eyes wandered about, that the environment was strange to him; when we had finished, and our cigarettes were alight, he became communicative.

"About that Scotchman," he commenced. "First time I met 'im was in Oxford Street, near the Circus. 'E was lookin' in a shop winder, wiv 'is mouth 'alf open, makin' the glass foggy wiv 'is breath. You never saw such a rig-out. 'E 'ad a golf cap three sizes too small on top of a yellow 'aystack of 'air what 'adn't been pressed down. 'Is eyebrows and eyelashes was of the same deli-

cate tint, while 'is eyes was the colour of a glass o' sea water. 'Is ears stood out from 'is 'ead tellin' yer they wasn't missin' any of the 'eavenly breezes, and 'is face was the colour o' smoked salmon. As for 'is 'ands, I don't believe there's a glove shop in London could fit 'im.

But 'is clothes was the things to startle yer. I've never seen such stuff as 'is suit was made of; looked like red and green 'orse cloth. Later, 'e told me nothin' finer was 'tur-r-ned oot o' Scotland.' 'E said it was 'A oo,' which I found meant 'All Wool.'

I give yer my word, I wouldn't a-walked about the streets o' London wiv 'im for a pound a minute, only I felt it'd be a sin to leave such a young innercent to be picked up by—well, 'Why throw 'im away?' I asked myself.

I blushed like a barmaid new to the business when I saw the people nudge each other as they passed us.

Seein' 'im standin' there wiv 'is mouth wide open lookin' at the ladies' things exposed for sale, I went up and stood by 'im. When I caught 'is eye, I smiled and said, 'Nice goods, ain't they?'

'Mon, it's positively beweelderin' in its indecency,' 'e ses. 'I'd tur-r-rn as red as a wee bit o' flannel if a female r-r-elation was standin' beside me the noo.'

'Why?' I asks. 'Are yer so innercent as all that?'

'I'm no' innercent,' 'e ses. 'I'm just plain Jock Mackecknie Maclachlan——' "

Isaacs made a valiant attempt to give the names their full value.

"I can't do it like 'im, or I'd give myself lock-jaw," he said. "'—Frae Carricknamuir-r——'"

He stopped again to interpolate: "Even that's enough to snap the plate of a set o' false teeth."

"'—Wi' sisters wha gang tae ker-r-r-k the Sawbath.'

I began to wonder if I could stick this chap wiv 'is lingo for long, and asked myself if the business was worth it. There was times when 'e was gabbin', I couldn't understand a word 'e was sayin'. At last, I 'ad to put it to 'im blunt. "'Ere, look 'ere, old sport,' I ses, 'what language may you be talkin'?' I ses, smilin' at 'im in a friendly way, to show no offence was meant. 'E looked quite surprised and opened 'is pink eyelids so wide I could see all 'is eyes at once.

But 'e wasn't offended. 'E laughed, and put 'is 'eavy 'and on me shoulder like a friend.

'Mon,' 'e ses, 'would ye be tellin' me ye no understand the Gaelic?'

Well, I thought, if that's 'is idea of givin' 'is tongue a treat, let 'im 'ave 'is 'Gaylick.' Me for steak and onions; and so I told 'im.

'I'm surprised at ye, I am thot,' 'e ses. 'An' you frae the Nor-rth too!'

Then I saw why 'e was surprised I didn't understand 'im; 'e took me for a Scotty. Which ordinary, would 'ave been a insult, you understand, but seein' it suited, I said I'd only been jokin'.

'That's a' to the guid, then,' 'e ses, amiable. 'An' noo,' 'e ses, mysterious like, 'I'll tell ye a secret. . . . Coom close, laddie!'

I got nearer to 'im, and 'e whispered in a voice what couldn't be 'eard further awf than the kerbstone.

'Mon,' 'e ses, 'I'm oop tae Loondon for fir-r-r-st time o' my life.' 'E stood away from me to see 'ow I took it. I don't think 'e'd a-been surprised if I'd dropped down in a faint at the news. 'Think o' it!' 'e ses, givin' me a smack on the shoulder what come near breakin' me collar bone. 'Think o' it! Oop to Loondon wi' the siller in me pooch!' 'E tapped 'is pocket to show me what 'e meant. 'And,' 'e ses, eyein' me wiv a merry twinkle, 'I'm goin' to see the sights. All o' them! The Wax-works, "The Angel" at Islington, Toor o' Loondon, the Scots Guards Barracks, St. Paul's Cathedral; I'll miss nane o' them; not the sma'est bittie.

An' perhaps did ye ever 'ear tell' ('e come closer still so that the bobby on point duty shouldn't 'ear 'im)—'did ye ever 'ear tell o' the "Empire"? Did ye?'

'E stood awf from me, lookin' as if 'e'd said something to shock me. I said I had, and promised to show it 'im later on. Then, feelin' bolder, I s'pose, 'e come up close to me again, and tickled my ear-'ole wiv 'is breath.

'Mon,' 'e ses, as 'e looked around to see no one was listenin', 'I'll tell ye th' tr-r-uth. I'm awfu' thir-r-rsty. D'ye ken a hoos o' refreshment where a body could get a taste o' the bonnie 'Ighland Dew?'

'It's too early,' I ses; 'but if yer wait till its time, I think I can take yer tɔ a sootable place.'

'Ye're a frin', 'e ses. 'A true frin'. 'Ere am I, a str-r-ranger to the toon o' Loondon, and ye're willin' to take me in 'and. A st-r-ranger to Loondon, but no' a stranger to Carricknamuir-r, ye'll understand. No' a stranger ther-r-re. Ask any

per-r-rson in Carricknamuir-r, "D'ye ken Jock Mackecknie Maclachlan?" an' see what reply ye'll get. 'E'll look at ye wi' 'is eyes wide open, an' 'e'll say, "Do I ken Jock Mackecknie Maclachlan? Aye, aye," 'e'll say, broodin' on the question as 'e strokes 'is beard wi' th' palm o' one 'and and the back o' th' other. And then 'e'll laugh. And then 'e'll r-repeat the question. And then 'e'll look intae ye'r eyes as 'e laughs and chuckles. And then 'e'll say, "Aye, aye, a bonnie joke, thot. A bonnie joke. To ask a per-r-rson in Carricknamuir if 'e kens Jock Mackecknie Maclachlan." An' maybe, 'e'll be sae full o' the joke, 'e'll gang awa' wi'oot answerin' th' question.'

And 'e laughed 'imself, but where the 'ell the joke come in, I can't see, and I've been tryin' for a fortnight.

Where do you think the joke was?" Isaacs asked me as if his brain were benumbed.

"I'm afraid you'd have to search for that in Carricknamuir," I said. "The Scotch have their own idea of humour, Isaacs."

"They 'ave, 'ave they?" he said with a certain amount of bitterness.

After a few moments' pause, as if to get rid of the taste of the joke, he said:

"Mind yer, I wasn't such a muggins as to let on I didn't see it. Not me! 'E might 'ave been offended. I laughed when 'e did, which made 'im say, 'Mon, ye must be Scawtch yersel', ye knowin' 'ow to chew on a rich joke sae weel. What's ye'r name?' 'e ses, eyein' me as if 'e'd found a long lost relation.

'I'm called Jamie Dewar,' I ses, the whisky man's name comin' pat to me tongue.

'Jamie,' 'e ses, 'I've took a likin' towards ye. Ye ken the toon weel an' I'm a stranger. Ye'll show me roond, eh? All the chair-r-ges tae me. Understand? I've got the siller; plenty o' it. Not on me. No, no, I'm no' sae green as thot. Some o' it. Twenty poond. Here.'

'E put 'is 'and against the fob pocket of 'is trousers, pattin' it lovin' like. 'There's more at the hotel, locked oop in th' drawer, safe and soond, in th' bedroom.'

'E showed me the key and winked.

'Ow much?' I asks, knowin' what a Scotchman's idea is o' money to burn, as a rule. You could a-blown me down wiv a puff o' wind when 'e whispers, 'A 'underd and feefty poond, Jamie; one 'underd and feefty poond, drawn fra' the bank to hae a guid time in Loondon toon.'

Lord! I was glad Providence'd made me put on my glad rags that mornin', so's I was all rigged up for the West End. You know 'ow fine I look in my blue serge soot wiv the pink shirt and black tie! Well, that's what I 'ad on that day, and o' course 'e could see I was all right, and fit company for 'im.

A 'underd and fifty yellor boys! All ready for me to—earn awf this yellor-'aired guy. But 'ow? I commenced to think quick and 'ard, believe me.

I must 'ave been thinkin' longer than I thought, 'cause 'e interrupted me, sayin':

'What's worryin' yer, Jamie? Ain't a 'underd and feefty enough for th' two o' us to see the sights o' Loondon?'

'Let's go into a restaurant and sit down,' I ses, to give myself time to arrange me programme, so

to speak. 'We'll be able to get a cup o' cawfy, and 'ave a talk. If I'm to stay wiv you, I must fix up a list o' places where we can go, so's we won't waste time, see?'

'Jamie,' 'e ses, linkin' 'is arm in mine, 'I put myself in your 'ands and glad I am to 'ae met ye. I've 'ear-r-rd tell o' peekpockets, o' air-r-rtfu' scoondrels able tae tak the shir-r-rt off ye wi'oot ye knawin' it. But when I cast me eyes upon ye, I said tae meself, "That's ma man to show me roond, if I can get 'im tae join 'ands." It's poor stuff, but we'll drink a coop o' coffee taegither. Whaur's the place?'

I took 'im to a Lyons shop, and while we was drinkin' the cawfy, I asked 'im if 'e played draughts. Just as a commencement, y'know; an innocent sort o' game.

'A wee bittie,' 'e ses, same as Stevenson might if 'e was asked by a stranger if 'e played billiards.

'I'm tellin' ye,' 'e went on while we was gettin' out the men on the board, 'so's to hae no unfair advantage o' ye, I'm the champion draught player o' Carricknamuir-r. I wadna lead ye into a trap. Shall I gie ye a man tae mak things even?'

'Not likely!' I ses emphatic, meanin' 'e should win the game, no matter 'ow bad 'e played. 'I'm a pretty good player myself, and you'll find me a 'ard nut to crack before I've done wiv yer.'

There was a double meanin' in that last part, only o' course 'e didn't see it.

'What's more,' I adds, as I passed 'im a cigarette—my cigars bein' wasted on 'im, I felt—'I'm goin' to play yer for a shillin' a game. Not more, as I ain't brought out much money wiv me this mornin'.'



'As ye wull,' 'e ses, 'but ye winna say I didna war-r-rn ye, Jamie.'

And 'e looked at me like a man playin', 'tip and run' wiv a little boy.

I won the toss and moved, and I 'ad all me work cut out to lose the game, believe me. I managed it though, and at the end, I 'ad to pay 'im eight shillin's, which 'e took wiv a sort o' protest, sayin', 'It wasna quite fair for a mon who'd won the fir-r-rst prize at the Presbyterian College competition to play ye level.'

'Never mind,' I ses light 'earted. 'I'll 'ave me revenge to-morrer, see if I don't.'

Then I ses to 'im very serious, 'And look 'ere, I ain't got any cash wiv me to-day, so you'll 'ave to pay to-night, but to-morrer, I'll bring fifty pound out wiv me, to show yer I ain't broke, and also so's I can pay my whack. I like yer!' I ses, lookin' at 'im most affectionate as we got up to go. 'I like yer! And we're goin' to 'ave a beano together. A real beano, such as you ain't seen even in Carrickmanoor. P'raps, I'll interdooce yer to some of the real ladies o' London; only it's expensive, so bring plenty o' splosh wiv yer. Same as me, see? But, 'alf and 'alf. I pays my way and you pays yours. I don't want no charity. When I meets a feller countryman—a stranger in this wicked city—it's me dooty to look after 'im. Dooty, that's what it is. But, not at 'is expense. Not likely,' I ses.

As 'e listened, the tears come into 'is eyes. I didn't know the Scotch was such a soft-'earted people. I felt that pluckin' 'im was 'ardly worthy o' me talents.

'Jamie,' 'e ses, 'yer wor-r-rds hae war-r-rmed me hair-r-rt. I'm prood o' ye! Fra this moment, we're more than brither Scotese; we're brithers. Gie's yer 'and.'

'E squeezed my two 'ands in one o' 'is, and ground the bones together, makin' me feel more pain in three seconds than I've 'ad in all me life. But I thought of the 'underd and fifty, which 'elped me to bear the agony.

When the bars opened, I took 'im into one where we could sit down. As you know, the Yidden don't drink much; cigars, yes; drink, no. But I took a whisky to keep 'im company. 'E drank 'is at a gulp with a little water after.

'Gran' stuff, thot,' 'e ses.

'Fine,' I ses, gettin' ready to go.

'To-morrer, we'll make a night o' it, laddie. When I got my toon legs wi' the same amoont o' bank-notes in me pooch as yersel'.'

'And different clothes,' I ses, takin' the chance o' givin' 'im a 'int, 'avin' seen the people stare at us.

'E looked down at 'imself, like as if 'e was admirin' 'em. After a minute, 'e ses, 'Wad ye no be admirin' them, Jamie? And ye a Scote. Winna the colours be remindin' ye of y'er own native land? Ah, weel, I'll change them for the morrer,' 'e ses, as affable as a new-fed baby.

At night I took 'im to the Empire, and when the comedians was on 'e seemed to drowse. I suppose 'is kind o' jokes bein' different to theirs they wasn't appreciated, but when the ballet gals tripped on, 'e woke up and took considerable interest in the performance.

FROM THE  
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SOCIETY

After the theatre, I went as far as Oxford Circus wiv 'im, when 'e said: 'I'll leave ye 'ere, Jamie; the hotel's but a step. Ye'll meet me 'ere to-morrer at noon? Ootside this verra wicked shop where they sell the silk petticoats. Ye winna be late? Good nicht then. And, Jamie,' 'e ses as I was movin' away, 'I think more o' ye for offerin' tae bring yer ain monny wi' ye. I'm Scotch, ye ken.' And 'e laughed that little silly laugh as 'e went across the road wiv long strides towards 'is hotel, leavin' me free to breathe, and tryin' to get rid of a 'eadache 'e'd give me with 'is foreign talk and 'is 'orrible jokes.

Next mornin' when I met 'im, 'e'd changed 'is togs as 'e'd promised, thank Gawd, and 'ad 'ad 'is 'air cut.

After lunch, which I paid for, we went to a matinée. I bought the tickets and let 'im see a roll of notes to show 'im 'e wasn't the only one wiv cash. Just to inspire 'im wiv confidence, like. Then we went to the hotel to see if there was any letters for 'im, and we was no sooner in the room than 'e pulled out a bottle o' whisky and made me drink nearly 'alf a glass neat, a thing I ain't used to.

'And what's the programme for the night, Jamie?' 'e asks, a few minutes after we'd started smokin'.

That was the time to start my plan o' campaign.

'To tell you the truth,' I ses, 'I feel a bit tired after the day's outin'. What d'you say to stoppin' in and 'avin' a quiet evenin'?'

'As ye like, Jamie,' 'e ses. 'I wadna tak ye oot if ye're fatigued. Ye can stay 'ere, and 'ave

a bite wi' me; then ye can gang awa' hame early and so be fresh for the morrer.'

'E rang the bell, and when the waiter come 'e looks at me for orders, so I said I'd 'ave a chop and chips. 'E said 'e'd 'ave the same.

'Weel now,' 'e ses, 'what d'ye say to a quiet evenin's readin'?''

Readin'! Think of it! And me wiv me plans all ready laid.

'Rather 'ave a game o' cards,' I ses. 'More interestin'.'

'Cair-rds!' 'e ses, lookin' at me as if I'd suggested fencin'. 'Can ye really play at the cair-rds?'

'Well, I don't suppose I can play as well as you can, 'specially if you're as good as you are at draughts,' I ses, encouragin' like.

'I'm better,' 'e ses. 'Ever so much better-r. I'd hae ye know I won the Carricknamuir Whist Tournament last year.'

'E looked at me as if 'e'd just come in from winnin' the Derby.

'What game d'yer play?' I asked 'im, careless like.

'"Beat your Neighbour," "Nap." D'ye play "Nap," Jamie?'

'Oh, aye,' I ses, droppin' into 'is lingo. 'D'yer play any other?'

'Weel,' 'e ses very slow, 'sometimes at Carricknamuir we hae a quiet game o' the "poker." 'Thot's a fine game, Jamie.'

'I don't know it very well,' I ses, 'but I don't mind tryin'.'

Luck was simply pourin' this looney like water into me lap, I thought. 'E squeegeed me 'and till

it nearly broke, did 'e? Wore me to a shadow wiv 'is rotten jokes, did 'e? Won eight bob awf me at draughts, did 'e? Let me pay all exes for a day, did 'e? I'd learn 'im that my society 'ad to be paid for; yes, and paid for 'andsome!

I 'appened to 'ave a pack o' cards in my pocket, but 'e preferred a new pack. Said I was 'is guest, and the cost 'wad only be a shillun'.'

'Noo, Jamie,' 'e ses when we 'ad cut for deal, 'I gie ye due notice, I'm a bor-rn gambler. Twa vices I hae, and one's the cair-rds. It's a sinfu' confession to make. One's the cair-rds——'

'What's the other?' I asked, wantin' to get to business.

'Ye'll laugh when I tell ye,' 'e ses. 'It's a guid joke.'

'Give it up,' I ses short, and losin' my patience.

'E clucked like a old 'en as 'e ses, 'The second vice, Jamie, he! he! it's—mon, but it's awfu' funny——'

'Well, spit it out, then, before it gets stale,' I ses; 'e was gettin' on my nerves somethink frightful.

'Mon,' 'e commences all over again, 'the second vice I hae is—the cair-rds! Did ye ever 'ear the like, Jamie? Twa vices! One's the cair-rds, and the ither's the cair-rds, too!'

This seemed to 'im the best joke 'e'd made so far, for 'e laughed and laughed till 'e come near chokin'. I tried to laugh too, but it was 'ard. Lord! it *was* 'ard. 'E called it a joke; to me it seemed like a disease.

'As I was tellin' ye, Jamie,' 'e ses, but I cut 'im short by askin', 'Do we play for five bob rises, or what?' and I begun to shuffle the cards to get

a bit o' practice. I reckoned wiv my knowledge o' shufflin' and dealin', I could skin this lump o' mud from the North in a few hours. I'll show yer one o' these days 'ow to deal a man four kings, and give yerself a 'andsome present o' four aces. It's all practice. You gets 'em at the bottom o' the pack, and when you deal, the man you're playin' against thinks you're dealin' from the top as usual. All first finger work.

Just as we was startin', dashed if 'e didn't get up and pour out more whisky for the two of us.

'Before we star-rt, Jamie, we'll drink tae the finest folk on ear-r-rth—the Scotese. Which is drinkin' to oorsel's, mon,' 'e ses.

Now, I'd 'ad as much as I wanted, and tried to get out o' takin' any more, but 'e wouldn't let me awf, so I swallowed the stuff, and 'oped it'd make it easier for me to finish 'im awf quick, as 'e seemed to be gettin' a bit sprung, I thought.

We started playin', and for a little while there wasn't much doin'. I was watchin' to see what 'e knew about the game. Then I thought I must get some o' my fine work in. But whether it was the whisky or the warmth o' the room, all I know is I couldn't manage things at all proper. 'E 'ad the luck of a Chinaman. Seemed to be always gettin' a full 'ouse, or a flush, or fours. Anyway, 'e 'ad far too much o' my money 'is side o' the table for my peace o' mind. Something like twenty quid was layin' there. The programme wasn't workin' out right at all, so when 'e went over to the sideboard to get more drink, I took the chance o' reachin' over to 'elp myself to some of it and change the good notes I'd given 'im for some of the private

printed ones. 'E must 'ave seen me through the lookin' glass at the back of the sideboard, for 'e turns round sharp and ses, 'What ar-re ye doin' wi' my money, Jamie?' I dropped the notes quick and begun to count 'is cards, tellin' 'im I 'adn't touched 'is money; I'd only leant over to see if I'd dealt 'im six cards.

Then 'e come back with more drinks. I told 'im I couldn't take another drop, for to tell the truth, I was beginnin' to feel very funny in the 'ead. 'E said if I didn't drink fair, 'e wouldn't play no more, and seein' 'e 'ad so much o' my cash, I 'ad to drink unless I was to lose it. So I swallowed the beastly stuff and 'oped for the best. Meanin' by that, I 'oped 'e'd be too far gone to see me rumblin' the cards.

But soon after we'd played some more 'ands, my 'ead begun to play tricks on me. The cards was turnin' round, the room was spinnin', and I couldn't keep my eyes in order. They *would* get fixed and starin', and my brain and 'ead *would* keep twistin' like the wheel of an engine.

'E must 'ave noticed it, 'cause I remember 'im sayin':

'Ye're a bit tired, Jamie; we'll play no more for a time. Lie ye doon on the couch and hae a rest. I'll do the same.' And 'e lifted me up and laid me on the sofa.

In two minutes I was fast asleep and I remember nothin' more till I woke up, shiverin', in a dark room, wiv a 'ead as big as a football, and achin' as if it'd been kicked by a whole team.

When I'd found the switches and turned up the lights, there was the cards just as we'd left 'em the

night before. But Mr. Jock Mackecknie Maclachlan 'ad woke up and gone out. Any rate, I supposed so, for 'e wasn't in the room. I thought all at once o' my money and put me 'and in me pocket to feel for it. All I found was the notes on the Bank of Elegance.

I rushed downstairs as quick as I could and asked the 'all porter whether 'e knew where Mr. Machlachlan was. 'E said 'e didn't know the gent, but after I described 'im, 'e said 'e'd left the hotel about ten the night before and 'ad left word that I wasn't to be called in the mornin', as I was rather tired.

'But it's 'is room,' I ses. 'I suppose 'e'll be comin' back some time. Or, 'as 'e took 'is luggage away?'

'Not 'is room, sir,' the man ses. 'Your room. Told us when 'e come, 'e was waitin' for you, as you was expected that day, and engaged the room for you.'

Of course by that time I'd made up my mind that I'd been picked up by a smarter man than I am, and couldn't help givin' 'im credit for the clever way 'e'd played the simple country looney. It was a new gag for me, and I'm goin' to try that line myself one o' these days. Live and learn, I ses. And if yer don't pay for yer experience, it ain't worth 'avin', as a rule.

I went back to the room for me 'at and stick, and on the table I saw a bit o' paper, wiv this wrote upon it: 'We'll be pluckin' more geese at Carricknamuir in the autumn. Come up. Ye'll be 'eartily welcomed by the minister o' the kirk and J. M. M.'



'E 'adn't left me wiv enough to buy a packet o' cigarettes, let alone the hotel bill, and they 'ad to send the 'all porter 'ome wiv me to get the cash.

The next Scotchman I trade wiv'll be able to retire wiv all my oof and without a fight. I give 'em best. But mind you, 'e deserved it; 'e played the part better than I've ever seen it done on the stage. I don't bear 'im any malice. Not a bit. What I would like to do is to go in pardners wiv 'im, that's all.

One thing I'm sure of," Isaacs said in conclusion. "If there's any Yid livin' up there, it's only because they've skinned 'im so clean 'e ain't got enough cash left to pay 'is fare out of the country."

## CHAPTER VII

### ISAACS ON THE YIDDEN

**I** WAS sitting in my office on a broiling day of August, being held in town by a case involving work over the long vacation, and picturing with a starved appetite what a paradise any seaside resort would be. I was interrupted by the boy announcing Mr. Isaacs, and I welcomed him, if only because he would turn the stream of my thoughts into a different channel.

He noticed the almost pleased look on my face, and at once his own expression took on a look of caution, such as it would assume if I had a favour to ask him.

He was reassured when I explained the reason of my welcome, and, as he said, "accepted my apologies."

"I've told you before, I'm not keen on gettin' smiles from people I meet. I never smile at anybody unless I'm after something they've got and I want, so it's natural they do the same to me.

If some of them chaps who write a lot about 'uman nature would come and live within 'alf a mile of Petticoat Lane (the 'ome of the East End Jews), and learn first 'and, instead of scribblin' from what they've been told, they'd be able to get a grip on the 'uman 'eart as would make their knowledge as strong as 'Three Star' brandy; as it is, their writin's about as satisfyin' as cold tea to a man who wants to feel the 'bite' in 'is throat.

Do you think prison's any punishment to a man who's threatened with it every day, owin' to 'is—er—occupation? Not it. It's the 'orrible feelin' that 'e's goin' to be cut off from a drink and smoke, he's afraid of. Why, lot's o' men I know would look on six months 'quod' as a 'rest cure' if it wasn't for that, and they'd be quite willin' to take so many strokes of the 'cat,' if each one meant a whisky neat and a cigar.

I 'eard a bloke say at a Club I belong to there didn't ought to be no prisons, and there wouldn't be if there wasn't somethin' wrong. 'E said in the very early days of the Jews there was a chief who was obeyed, 'cause 'e knew what was best for 'em; what they ought to eat; 'ow they ought to work. And the tribes followed 'im and did as they was told, every one doin' 'is bit, and every one gettin' 'is share.

'E asked 'ow can things be right when in one street you find a man with the money to buy more food than 'e could eat if 'e 'ad fifty stomachs; with a store of clothes for every sort of weather; fur coats when it's freezin'; silk socks and shirts for the summer; who never 'as done, and never will do, a day's work. A block away, in another street, there are 'underds livin', 'alf starvin'. Not because they don't or won't work, but because their labour only gives 'em enough food to keep 'em alive.

You ain't never been 'ungry, I expect: I 'ave. When the sight of bread in a shop makes you want to break a window to steal a loaf; when the smell of cookin' almost makes you cry; when you can't keep warm in the day, and you can't sleep at night

'cause of the gnawin' pain in the stomach which is shriekin' for grub. Can you expect a boy to grow up into a strong man livin' like that?

That chap finished by sayin' that unless something 'appened, there would be a revolution such as this country didn't dream of at the present moment."

"There are signs that things are moving in the direction you indicate, Isaacs, and I believe some of the leaders of the Tribes—to use your simile—have already publicly stated similar views, in, perhaps, different language."

Isaacs sat silent for a time musing on some problem, so I didn't disturb him, knowing from past experience that trying to jog or jolt his peculiarly formed brain would either send him off at a tangent, or make him sterile of talk.

"Life," he continued, after a moment or two, "Life is funny; one moment, and it's blessin' you; the next, it's cursin'; one minute it puts roses under your nose to smell, and just as you're enjoyin' it, it gives you a shove and you find yourself in the sewer. Be ill in bed, and the sun shines; get well, able to go out, and it rains in sheets. Do a man a bad turn, and it's likely 'e'll be a good pal; take 'im out of the gutter where 'e's sellin' collar studs at two a penny, 'elp 'im good and proper, and behind your back, 'e'll slander you to every one you know.

Only just now, as I was comin' along 'ere, I met a chap who scowled at me as if I'd tried to stab 'im in the dark. And it's only three months ago 'e called me a true friend 'cause I lent 'im five pounds to save 'im bein' turned out of 'is 'ome. Why should 'e glare at me like that, now——"

"He was probably afraid you were going to ask him to return it," I said.

"Well, supposin' I was. If 'e can't pay, let 'im say so, not look at me as if I'd got leprosy and was comin' too near 'im. These sorts of things make a man change 'is nature.

Another case I 'eard of last week. A money-lender couldn't get 'is money from a young swell in the West End whose bill was overdue. Instead of goin' to the lender and askin' for time, 'e sends a friend.

'Let 'im come 'imself and ask for it, same as 'e did when 'e borrowed it,' the lender said. That ain't unreasonable, is it?"

I admitted it seemed to be perfectly reasonable, especially if it would satisfy the *amour propre* of the lender.

"Well, what do you think the young swell said when 'e 'eard it?

'I ain't goin' to 'umble myself before any dam'd Jew money-lender,' 'e said. Do you wonder the lender made 'im a bankrupt and 'e 'ad to leave the army? Yet I'll wager, all 'is friends would call Aarons—that ain't 'is real name—everything but the right one——"

"What's that?" I asked.

"A Jew, proud of 'is race, and defender of 'is—what was that you called it, 'armer prop'? Does that mean keepin' the armour of 'is pride in proper order?"

"It will do as a translation," I said, surprised at the extensive vocabulary he was using.

"Well then, ain't we entitled to consideration for our feelin's? Even if we are, when we go to

the theayter, a bit loud in our talk and dress. You must make allowances. We're old in race, but new in freedom, which accounts for the—what was the word I 'eard a man call it—exude? No, exuber——”

“Exuberance, you mean, I expect,” I said.

“That's it. Exuberance of spirits. We're like a lot of schoolboys at breakin' up. Only, instead of school lastin' three months, with an average whackin' for each boy of one a term, we've been in the school of persecution for 'underds and 'underds of years, with a whackin' to death frequent, to remind us we didn't belong to the country we lived in. That's why my old father came 'ere to live, and though 'e's comfortable enough, I know 'e'd go back to Kiew to-morrow if 'e was sure 'e wouldn't be 'arassed out of 'is life by officials who live on bribes. So when you find fault with us——”

“I don't, Isaacs, though I feel very inclined to, sometimes,” I said.

“Oh, you. You make money out of me,” he replied.

“That isn't the reason at all,” I said; uppishly, I fear.

“Well, what is it then?” he asked, ready to fight.

“You've given the reason, yourself, in your discourse on the subject.”

“Oh, well, if that's so, it's all right,” he said, mollified.

“You see,” he continued, “we come from the East, and it's so difficult for a non-Jew to understand our ways of thought. When people see two of us 'agglin' over a deal, they think it's the meanness of the Jew. It's no such thing; it's just a war

of brains, and the one who wins is pleased because 'e won; the value only counts a bit. 'E therefore gets a double joy out of the transaction.

That's why it's so dead easy to make money out of the Christians. They 'ate bargainin' and soon lose patience; we know that, and play 'em till they're tired, and we get it our way.

Another thing, 'ave you noticed 'ow the Yidden trades in articles difficult to value? Furs, now. Say I bring you a jacket made of coney seal——"

"Never heard of it," I said.

"It's supposed to imitate sealskin, and women, when it first came out, thought it was some new sort of seal that 'ad been found. It looks like sealskin when it's dyed a nice dark brown. What it is, is good old rabbit. But if the Yidden 'ad called it 'rabbit' ladies would 'ave been prejudiced against it. Now they're used to it, it doesn't matter, though it's still called 'coney seal.'

Call a muff or collar 'black cat' and who'd buy it? Not your wife, I'll bet. But when it's ticketed in the window 'South American sable' or some other fancy name the Yidden 'ave thought of, it's sold as soon as it's put into the shop window. And very likely, it was mewin' in the lady's back yard a few months ago. See the point?"

"There's something in it, no doubt. I'm not in trade, and therefore don't understand these niceties of distinction," I said.

"Take the stone trade; diamonds, pearls, emeralds, all of the jewels worn by them as can afford to wear 'em, and tell me 'ow many Christians you'll find in the trade by comparison with the Jews. They ain't in it at all worth talkin' about, 'cept in

the retail. Our people control it right from South Africa, where the natives dig 'em out of the ground, to the cuttin' 'em into shape in Amsterdam, to Hatton Garden—that's where they're sold wholesale to New York, Paris, London, everywhere.

To tell you the truth, the Jew's got the eye for value, whether it's pictures, stones, furniture; what's more, we got the gamblin' spirit 'ighly developed, and the love of a deal is planted in our systems strong as English oak. And if ever the day comes when that is washed out of us through mixin' too much with your people, we shall 'ave lost our power; and our blood, rich now, (it must be, or we should 'ave been wiped out by the persecutions we've stood) will become as thin as—well, yours."

"There are other things in the world besides making money, Isaacs."

"What other things can there be but money? It buys everything a mortal man can want, I should say," he replied.

"You won't some day. If not you, your descendants. I don't think you are aware there are heaps of your people, settled in this country for generations, who would rather be known as authors, scientists, painters, than have all the money in Europe; they are worth much to the community at large, for they help in the uplifting of the world."

"As how? I don't understand," Isaacs said.

"It's this way. Suppose you had all the money you wanted——"

"It ain't possible," he interrupted.

"And you had a terrible skin disease," I went



on. "Your money couldn't cure you, as money. That's obvious. But, now suppose a clever man—Jew or Christian—it doesn't matter which—has found a cure and is willing, not only to cure *you*, but a million other sufferers, and takes his payment in the gratitude of those he has cured. Surely, he's of more use than the merely rich man, whose money was here before he made it, and will be here after he is dead, and who will be forgotten before his will is proved. But, the death of the scientist will make no difference; his work will be carried on after he has departed, and he has the glorious satisfaction of knowing what he has accomplished for his fellow human beings.

And speaking of such men, did you ever hear of any Jews who would rather do something like this for humanity than make money?" I asked him.

"Then they ought to know better, when they could make money with their brains," he replied.

But seeing he was in a receptive mood, I went on:

"They couldn't know better, Isaacs. Did you ever hear of a Jew, still living, called Gollancz? A professor and a deep thinker who works for the benefit of you and me. Of Hertzian waves that are of enormous value to the world? Of Magnus, a scholar knighted by the King for his educational work? Of Solomon J. Solomon—he's not wanting to change his name, like you, Isaacs? Of Mendelssohn, a man whose music is as sweet to-day as when he wrote it?

Give me a day, and I'll prepare you a list of a hundred Jews who care no more for money than you do for astrology, but whose lives are very precious to the world.

Those are the men we breed in this country, who after a few generations have imbibed the traditions of the English race at schools and universities. Those are the Jews who count, and not the creatures who die through worry because they've only made ten millions, instead of twelve. They lived with the paltriest ambition one can think of, and when they're dead, their names are rightly forgotten within a week."

"'Ere, stow it!" Isaacs said impatiently. "I didn't come 'ere to listen to you runnin' down my people——"

"I'm not running them down at all; rather the contrary. I want to make you think of something besides money, and for this reason. I've told you of Jews who have set themselves the task of worthiness, and have made their names honoured. I want you to become a worthy citizen by worthy means, and you have to go away and think it out. Set yourself to make a business which will bring you honour. Then, you will not want a poor police court lawyer like me, and if you do, I shall have the pleasure of acting for you in the capacity of plaintiff more often than happens at present."

"I didn't know you could 'gab' so much," he said good-naturedly. "Why, with practice, you'd equal me—or nearly. I'm off. You're in the lecturin' mood and 'ave stolen my part. I meant to 'old the stage, and blowed if you ain't got right into the limelight. See you soon. Tol-lol."

## CHAPTER VIII

### CHEVOLSKI'S FIRE

**T**HIS is my friend, Mr. Hyman Chevolski," Isaacs said, introducing a beady-eyed, greasy-looking, undersized gentleman of distinctly foreign aspect. Mr. Chevolski smiled, putting out a none too clean hand which I judiciously overlooked as I pointed to a seat.

"We've come to see you about makin' a bill o' sale on the goods and fixtures in his premises," Isaacs began, jerking his thumb in the direction of his friend.

"In whose favour?" I asked.

"There's no favour about it," he replied sharply, misunderstanding my question. "It's a matter o' business. I've lent 'im a lot o' money upon certain terms, and this is the security."

"I follow," I said. "How much have you lent him?"

The simple question caused an embarrassing silence for a moment or two, and as Isaacs could not or would not answer, I turned to Mr. Chevolski and repeated it. He was very flurried and passed his hand over his forehead as he looked helplessly at Isaacs. "I don't know—I don't remember—I don't understand the kvestion," he replied shiftily.

"It is a very easy one," I said. "You are giving Mr. Isaacs a bill of sale on your goods and chattels for money advanced. It is necessary to state the consideration therein."

"Won't love and affection do?" Isaacs suggested.

"It certainly will not. He is not your wife or your daughter. There must be a sum specified, and it is for you gentlemen to state it."

"Put it down at £2,500, then," Isaacs said, having had time to think.

"Do you agree to that, Mr. Chevolski?"

"Something like dat," he replied blankly, keeping his eyes upon the carpet.

"You must know the exact amount, having lent the money," I said, looking at Isaacs.

"Course I 'ave, and got the receipt too," he answered, with perfect self-possession.

"May I see it?"

"Left it at 'ome; I'll bring it to-morrow," he replied quickly—too quickly, it seemed, but I said nothing.

"Very well," I continued. "Now, attached to the bill of sale there must be an inventory——"

"What's that?" they asked together, half jumping up from their seats, alarm and suspicion blended in the tone.

"A list of the goods on the premises particularised for the purpose of identification——"

"Oh, that don't matter," Isaacs broke in. "It's everything in the place."

"There must be an inventory to comply with the law, Mr. Isaacs," I explained. "You'd better have that done and come back to me with it, then we can proceed. We can't get on without it, I assure you." And they left, looking rather crest-fallen, Chevolski especially.

Some days afterwards, they turned up again,

Isaacs' face more razor-like than ever in its sharpness; Chevolski's being, if possible, a shade more greasy.

"Everything's all right this time," Isaacs said, taking papers from his pocket and handing them to me.

"Who took this inventory?" I asked.

"'E did," Isaacs replied, nodding at Chevolski.

Isaacs had the faculty of placing responsibility on the shoulders of others.

"It should have been done by an independent person——"

"Oh, it's all right, I know that," Isaacs said, impatiently, foreseeing further unlooked-for obstacles.

"Did you check it, then?" I asked.

"No, not me," he replied very firmly. "I don't understand things like that."

"Very well. Now, where is the receipt for the money you have lent?"

Isaacs gave me some suspiciously new and clean papers. I noticed the dates were different—and the sum totalled to £2,600, which figure they both agreed was correct.

"Did you pay these sums by cheque, or how?" I asked Isaacs.

"Now what does that matter?" he replied irritably. "Ain't it enough 'e's 'ad the money?" Then, glaring at Chevolski, he asked: "Ain't I paid it to you at different times, eh?"

For once Mr. Chevolski was very decided in his reply; he went so far as to give me his solemn word of honour to this effect, an assurance which, of course, was final and convincing.

"In what form did you receive it, Mr. Chevolski?" but before the latter had time to answer Isaacs interrupted.

"Didn't I pay it to you in notes?" he asked, looking at Chevolski as if he were about to assault him.

The question, to me, savoured somewhat in the nature of prompting.

"Yes, notes," Chevolski replied, as if in a dream. Then: "Bank-notes," he added, with conviction.

"What denomination—in what amounts?" I persisted, eyeing Chevolski.

Again Isaacs interposed. "Ten-pound notes," he answered. Then, correcting himself, remembering, perhaps, they could be traced by their numbers: "No, one-pound notes; not those old ones which stuck together, so as you always felt 'em to see whether you'd got two for one; the nice new 'un's, wasn't they, Chevolski?" he asked firmly, looking at him.

"One-pound notes," Mr. Chevolski said, almost like a parrot.

"What is your trade or profession, Mr. Chevolski?"

Here was a question which could be answered without hesitation, I thought; but before Chevolski could speak, Isaacs replied for him.

"He's in the wholesale clothing."

"Address?" Isaacs gave it.

"You're insured, I suppose, Mr. Chevolski?"

"You bet," Isaacs said. "I've seen to that," taking from his pockets papers which he handed me.

"How shall I describe you, Mr. Isaacs?"

"Merchant—no—financier. Looks better."

Asking Mr. Chevolski to step outside a moment, which he appeared to do with a sense of great relief, I said to Isaacs: "It is not my business to enquire into your private affairs further than to do the legal part of them, but I am curious as to this sudden affluence——"

"What's that?" he asked quickly, and with some mistrust.

"I didn't know you were so well off. £2,600 is a large sum——"

"Done very well since the war in various ways," he replied, assuming an air of apparent carelessness.

"You must have to be able to advance such amounts," I replied, not at all convinced.

"Tell you about it one of these days; not now. Wait till this affair's all complete, see?" he added.

"Your friend doesn't strike me as a particularly good business man, and frankly, I shouldn't care to put so much in his quarter as you have done," I said. The advice, however, was unnecessary and left Isaacs quite cold.

"A bit green," Isaacs said. "But 'e'll do all right under my protection. I'll watch 'im, proper."

"I hope he's not another of your partners, though. They always seem so unfortunate."

"Never take a pardner what knows more than you do, if you can 'elp it," he said. "That's askin' for it. I ain't forgot, once, 'ow a chap called Steinbaum nearly 'ad me on a 'ook like a tittlebat. It was a jewellery business 'e was openin', whole-sale. Before I knew you," he added, seeing I didn't remember it. "The lawyer made the pard-

nership paper, and I nearly fainted when I read as 'ow I was to go out an' do the sellin', while 'e was to stop at 'ome an' do the buyin'. Nice thing, that! I couldn't 'alf see 'im arrangin' for the goods to be charged at a 'igher price, and 'im gettin' a private drawback from the firm 'e bought from, and pocketin' it. Oh, no, not at all.

Not only that. He was to be the one to sign all cheques and receive the moneys paid by the customers. An' me goin' to put in a bit o' cash, mind you! I nearly fainted, I was so indignant.

When I told 'im I was the one to take in the money and sign the cheques, because I understood financial matters, 'e laughed—I never saw a man laugh so 'earty. 'E asked me if I thought 'e was born yesterday.

'I don't know when you was born,' I says, 'but if I signed that paper, I know 'ow soon I should die.'

'Well then,' 'e ses, 'I'll make you a great concession. We'll both sign the cheques—there now.'

I agreed to that, thinkin' 'ow I'd change my signature at the bank every week—'im bein' so 'andy with the pen—providin' I did the buyin'.

'But you don't understand jewellery buyin',' 'e says. 'I'm an expert!'

'So am I,' I says, 'in one part of the buyin'.'

'And which is that?' 'e asks, very simple like.

'The secret drawback part,' I says, lookin' at 'im 'ard.

'Isaacs,' 'e says, sad like, 'you must be a born crook to think o' such dishonest things.'

'No such thing,' I ses; 'but if I was, I should



remind yer of the old sayin' "Set a thief to catch a thief." "

So the pardnership was off, and 'e set out to find a mug.

He got copped, though, later on, for sellin' a lady a ring as 'old gold,' when it was only 'rolled gold.' Serve 'im right for writin' it on the bill, 'cause when the magistrate asked 'im what 'e 'ad to say, 'e said 'e was so busy at the time, 'e must 'ave left out the 'R' before the word 'old.' And when the magistrate asked 'im to write the word on a piece of paper, he spelt it 'r-o-l-l-e-d.' There's a juggins for you, with all 'is cleverness. Three months it cost 'im, and cheap too. Teach 'im a lesson that cheatin' don't pay."

And he left the office with the light of virtue and high principle shining out from his eyes.

Some three months after, I noticed in the evening paper a fire had occurred in a street contiguous to the Bethnal Green Road, through which the premises of a Mr. Chevolski had been completely destroyed. Having nothing to do the next morning, and with the recollection of business done by me for this gentleman and Isaacs, I thought it could do no harm if I visited the scene of the conflagration, and found the Salvage Corps already in occupation.

Getting into conversation with one of the men, I learnt the fire had been very fierce, with the result that nothing but one or two articles in the basement had been saved, and they were of no value except, perhaps, to the insurance company.

He declined to say what they were—"a matter

for the inspector," he said, "but, I should say they're worth a lot to the company."

"I'm glad you think they are of value," I remarked, "as they may help to set off the loss the insurance company will make."

"It's possible they may set off a good deal of it," he replied enigmatically, and by his manner I could see it was no use trying to pump him.

When I got to the office Isaacs and Chevolski were waiting for me.

"Terrible news!" Isaacs said, as if he would burst into tears. "Terrible news! Poor Chevolski's factory was burnt down last night. Not a rag left—not a button, even."

"I've been to see the place this morning," I said.

"Fine fire, wasn't——" he commenced, and, seeing the expression on my face, he immediately amended it. "Fine, I mean, as a sight for any one but me and Chevolski, of course."

"I didn't see it till this morning," I replied. "You did, evidently, by your remark."

"Yes, I saw it right enough; so did Chevolski. I 'eard about it from a friend when I was in Shore-ditch, and ran all the way to see if they saved anything—'course, I 'oped they would, but they didn't."

"How did you know about it, Mr. Chevolski?" I asked.

"I 'eard about it from anudder friendt," he said, evidently thinking it must be a good reply, as Isaacs had made it.

"Anybody hurt?" I asked.

"No, not a soul. You see, dey leaves off der

vork at seven, undt der fire didn't start till eight, just as I vas leaving der place. I noticed a shmell of burning on der groundt floor, undt soon dere vas a leetle smoke, undt I vas too frightened to go undt see vat it was, but I vaited on der groundt floor, 'oping it vould soon go out; but it didn't, undt ven I saw der flames, I ran away to der corner of der street, ven I commenced to call out loud, 'My factory's afire! my factory's afire! Vere is der Fire Brikades! vere is der Fire Brikades?' I never knew deir addresses, you see, undt my 'ead vas so disconnected in der brains, I couldn't t'ink at all vat to do. Ven a policeman stopped me I told 'im undt 'e breaks a pane of glass in a red pillar, undt den in a few minutes dey gallops up to der place, vit me after dem. But, ven dey gets dere, der place vas so alight on every floor, dey couldn't put it out. Clot'ing's a terrible t'ing to burn so kvick, ain't it?" he appealed to me.

"But you said a friend told you of the fire, Mr. Chevolski," I reminded him.

"Dat's vat Isaacs said," he replied, "undt p'raps I copied 'im. I 'ardly know vat I am saying, I'm so upset by dis terrible fires. You vill egscuse me, I'm sure. I've only 'ad one fire before, undt I vas ill for veeks, till der insurance vas settled."

"That's what we've come for," said Isaacs, getting on to the dominant thought in his mind. "The insurance money. To ask you to see to it."

"Do you know if the books are saved? Because they are necessary to enable you to formulate your claim," I said.

"I don't know yet. They won't let us get in,"

he answered. "It's very fortunate, we only finished takin' the stock two days ago, and I've got the list all right, 'cause I took it 'ome to check the addin' up. I'll bring it round."

"How does the stock list compare with the amount insured?" I asked.

"Comes to more; much more," Isaacs said. "The insurance is £2,500, and the stock and fixtures comes to £3,480. We shall lose awful by this terrible fire," he said, as if very distressed, while Chevolski also shook his head in despair.

"Was there anything of value in the basement?"

"No, nothin'," Isaacs replied. "Only used for empty cases and such, wasn't it, Chevolski?"

"Only cases," Chevolski said in reply.

"That's all right. I mentioned it because the salvage people have found something they say will be of value to the insurance company."

"Value!" exclaimed Isaacs. "They can keep all they find of value, after what I've seen with my own eyes. Lot o' value, believe me! All I've seen there is about two pounds' worth of wood, and some old iron, which'd 'ave to be very cheap if I'm to buy it, I tell you."

"Yes, but it may mean it is something which may invalidate the insurance policy; upset the claim," I said.

At this, they both jumped jerkily as if they were large marionettes, and Mr. Chevolski's face perspired to such an extent, it made little rivulets, which cleaned irregular channels thereon, until the water lost itself in the forest of his straggling beard.

Isaacs' face, on the contrary, was so tense, it

resembled a rat at bay. He turned to Chevolski, and in a voice which cut like a butcher's knife, asked:

"What 'ave you left in the cellar? Out with it! You can talk frank before 'im," pointing at me; "'e's a friend. What is it, eh?"

"Not'ing at all dat I can t'ink of, only der cans," he said, feeling none too happy.

"Cans! What cans? Water cans! Beer cans! What cans?" Isaac rapped out at him, his words coming as swiftly as shots from a revolver.

"You know! Der oil cans," Chevolski said in a frightened tone.

"What were you doing with oil cans in a clothing factory?" I asked, looking at Chevolski.

"To lubricate the sewing machines," Isaacs replied for him, quickly.

I was relieved to hear this, as the word "oil" made me think of other uses it might, conceivably, be put to.

I told Isaacs to bring me the insurance policy and the stock sheets, which he did next day.

An examination of the former showed what I expected—the usual "average clause," and I explained to him that all insurance companies inserted this clause, so that people who insured had to take a share of the risk with them, thereby compelling them to do their best to guard against fire. He didn't quite understand, I could see, so I elucidated.

"You see, when one insures and a fire occurs, the person insured must prove his stock to have been worth that amount. By the average clause, you have insured yourself for a quarter of the sum

involved; this has the effect of making the insured firm very careful to take every precaution against fire, and thus the fire insurance company is partly protected. In your case, if everything is in order, you will receive from the company three-quarters of £2,500, or, £1,875."

"The swindlers!—there's cheats for you! And I paid 'em for £2,500! I've never known such dishonesty! Wish I'd known their tricks, I'd 'ave insured for £5,000; then I should 'ave 'ad 'em for" (making a rapid calculation) "nearer £4,000, shouldn't I?"

"Providing the stock could be shown to be worth £5,000," I replied.

"Oh, that's easy arranged," he said; and I didn't discuss it further, as I felt it would serve no useful purpose.

Isaacs' claim having been made, in due course I received a letter saying an official of the company would wait on me in regard to it, so I wrote Isaacs and Chevolski to attend.

When they arrived I told Isaacs he must explain that he took out the policy as holder of a bill of sale for money advanced; I advised Chevolski to say as little as possible, but, in any event, to avoid contradictory answers.

The company's representative was on time, and, after the necessary introductions, opened the ball by saying: "It is only fair to Mr. Isaacs to let him know my company regard this fire as having taken place under very suspicious circumstances, and unless I am able to effect an arrangement satisfactory to them, they intend to probe the whole affair to the bottom. Mr. Isaacs may, for the

moment," and he looked at Isaacs with pin-point eyes, continuing, "but only for the moment, consider himself a listener. I, or somebody else, may have occasion to elicit answers to certain questions, from Mr. Isaacs, in another place."

Isaacs, taking a keen interest in the ceiling, said nothing.

"Now, Mr. Chevolski, until recently, you were in a very small way of business. Suddenly your stock is increased out of all proportion to your trade. Will you explain why?"

"I borrowed der moneys from 'im," pointing to Isaacs—"to make it bigger."

"Why? what grounds had you to warrant you in doing so?"

"Vat groundts? Der best of groundts. My goods is der finest value on der markets—dat's der groundts," Chevolski answered in a somewhat truculent manner.

"What lubricating oil do you use in your business, Mr. Chevolski?"

"Der ordinary; same as eferybody else."

"Is it brown in colour?"

"Light brown," Chevolski replied.

"Say the colour of ale?"

"Very pale ale," Isaacs interposed.

"Excuse me, Mr. Isaacs, I directed my question to Mr. Chevolski."

"Very light ale," said Chevolski, varying the adjective, but feeling on safe ground since Isaacs had used a similar term.

"Where do you buy it?"

"Somedimes 'ere, somedimes dere," Chevolski

said, throwing his arms out in different directions.

"In what quantities?"

"Somedimes a pint, somedimes two; it all depends."

"Then you'll be able to explain presently—not now—why there are at this moment in your basement, two, nearly empty, two-gallon cans of lamp oil." Chevolski remained silent.

"That was for cleanin' the machines," broke in Isaacs excitedly.

"To come to your stock," continued the company's representative. "It consisted, principally, of made-up garments, by the sheets your solicitor has supplied us with. Am I right in saying that the average number of buttons on a garment, taking overcoats, ordinary coats, waistcoats, and trousers, would be about seven or eight?"

"Dat's about right," Chevolski replied, wondering what on earth the man was driving at.

"You used practically all, what is called in the trade, 'ivory' buttons in your business?"

Chevolski nodded his head in agreement.

"According to your stock sheets, the number of garments burnt would have had on them in the neighbourhood of"—he had the figures on a piece of paper—"thirty-four thousand buttons?"

"Kvite likely," Chevolski said, almost jauntily, the large quantity and the tone of the representative's voice sounding promising.

"It may surprise you to know these buttons do not burn in an ordinary fire, and careful sifting of the débris enables the stock to be easily checked. We have discovered exactly five thousand six hundred and eight buttons, including any not-used at



the time of the fire, and," he said, turning to me, "we propose to pay the claim on that basis; if this is not accepted, we shall fight the case. It is for you to discuss the matter with your clients," he concluded, rising to go.

"What does the amount work out at?" I asked.

"Exactly £640, less the average clause, which reduces it to £474. Good day." He bowed to me, and ignoring Isaacs and Chevolski, left the room.

Directly he had gone, their pent-up excitement burst into a storm, and they both commenced to rave, neither listening to the other. Isaacs described the representative as a fraud, an impostor, an obtainer of honest men's money by false pretences; there was no justice in the country, it was worse than Russia, and he was glad he wasn't an Englishman any more. Chevolski was firm in his opinion the man was a thief and would come to no good.

When the duet showed signs of exhaustion Isaacs asked me my opinion as to what should be done, and I strongly advised acceptance of the terms offered, pointing out that going to law would ruin him financially, and it might result in something much worse for both of them. This latter impressed Isaacs considerably, I could see, and after discussion outside the office, it was decided to follow my advice.

When the matter was finally settled, he called to see me, and I expressed satisfaction at the way the business had finished.

"Not so bad," he remarked. "Only I'm sorry for Chevolski. 'E ain't done well out of it."

"How's that?" I asked.

“Well, you see, I went into the business on the condition I got two-thirds and ’im one-third. ’Is sewin’ machines, though nearly wore out, was worth, with ’is stock, near three ’underd; ’e only gets a ’underd and fifty-eight, so ’e loses about a ’underd and fifty. I get the balance.”

“But that still makes you a heavy loser, doesn’t it? What about the two thousand five hundred pounds you lent him in notes?”

“Oh, them!” he said contemptuously, “they were on the Bank of Engraving. Not real ones, you know, but pretty, all the same. Prettier than the kosher ones, I think.”

## CHAPTER IX

### MR. AND MRS. LION RECEIVE

**M**R. and Mrs. Lion were giving a party to a select number of friends to celebrate the engagement of their elder daughter, Rebekah, to Mr. Jacob Prince. By the good offices of Isaacs, I was present.

When I asked him to what I was indebted for the invitation, he said:

“You’re comin’ as my solicitor-friend. Old Mirzbach, the shot-ger (marriage broker), won’t pay what’s due to me; so as ’e’s goin’ to be there, I want ’im to see yer. That’ll frighten ’im into partin’ up, see?”

The Lions lived in a house much more solidly built than those in the immediate neighbourhood, having large and lofty rooms, and which, I imagined, must originally have been occupied by a different and higher class of resident.

It was set well back from the road, and no doubt, at one time, the front garden had been cultivated and furnished with flowers by former occupants. Now, there was only a gravel path which had not been renewed for years, a wilderness of weeds, and a bare patch of sodden ground on which grew a few clumps of rank grass, the residue of a former lawn. Gardening, evidently, was not a strong point of the present owners.

When I arrived, Isaacs was waiting for me at the front gate. A transformed, well-washed and

shaved Isaacs, in a frock-coat, a shade too long, and a bowler hat. The latter detracted somewhat from his appearance, but, generally speaking, I had never seen him look less like an East Ender.

He greeted me by asking how I thought he looked, and on my complimenting him on his "get-up," he said:

"This is one of the times when I wear my Shool (Synagogue) togs, only I ain't got a silk 'at to top awf wiv."

As he spoke, a lady passed through the gate.

"Now, what the 'ell does she want 'ere, I wonder!" Isaacs exclaimed, staring at her as she walked up the path to the house.

Not understanding, I asked him the reason of his remark.

"Why, she's a Mrs. Passov," he answered, still keeping his gaze on the back of the lady. Then turning to me, he said: "She tried to 'ook Jacob Prince for 'er own gal, only it didn't come awf. Jacob wasn't takin' any wife without she brought somethink wiv 'er. Not 'im. Though, mind yer, 'e went pretty far wiv the gal, further than 'e ought if 'e didn't mean business; takin' 'er out to the theayters and dances, andceterer," he concluded, as we walked up to the house.

I listened perfunctorily, not being interested in such private matters.

Having given our coats and hats to a maid, which she piled up with others on chairs against the wall, we found our way upstairs, where Isaacs introduced me to Mrs. Lion, as "my solicitor."

The lady's proportions made her look shorter than she was, and the large quantity of artificial

hair she wore attracted attention by two small ostrich plumes decorating it, which waved to and fro, when she moved her head, like palm fronds in a wind. It struck me that her face had at least two layers of powder too much.

"Glad to see any friend of Mr. Isaacs," she said pleasantly, giving me a rather too warm hand, her gaze as she spoke being directed not at me, but at other guests coming up the stairs behind us.

After a very short conversation, Isaacs steered me towards Mr. Lion, whose ears stuck out at right angles, and whose finger-nails were so hard and horny as to remind me of the claws of a large dog. He appeared to be very bored with the whole proceedings; he was probably calculating the seemingly endless cost of rearing and marrying children. I found it difficult to make conversation with him, and was relieved when Isaacs led me off to enjoy the crowning honour of being introduced to the newly affianced Miss Lion, who was standing by the side of her fiancé.

In appearance Miss Lion was "homely," with the figure of a comfortable matron, and bidding fair, by the time she reached forty, to find sitting down much easier than standing up.

As we approached she was surrounded by some girl friends, busily examining her engagement ring, not hesitating to express their opinions upon it. Some were in favour of claw settings, whilst others preferred that known as "gipsy"; some liked diamonds; others, pearls. This operation finished, they all made some jocular remark to young Prince, who in return made a chaffing observation to each, telling one, that when the right man came along

she would not be particular what sort of ring he gave her, and warning another that if she was not quick, she would be left upon the shelf.

Everybody seemed to be talking except Mr. Lion and Mr. Prince, senior; these two gentlemen sat in solitary silence, each dissatisfied with some part of the arrangement as far as he was concerned.

"I was just askin' who you was," a middle-aged lady said to me after I had been presented by Mr. Isaacs. "You ain't one of us, are yer?"

I replied laughingly that I was a mere Christian, and therefore, much to my regret, was not "one of us." She took the reply seriously, and said as if to comfort me for my misfortune: "Oh, there's good and bad of all sorts. I daresay that when you get to know them, Christians are just as nice as other people; only, I've never mixed with 'em, me bein' brought up very strict by my parents."

"Quite so," I replied, for want of a better answer, and not knowing what to say next.

The lady, however, ignored me, and resumed the conversation with her friend, which I had interrupted.

"As I was sayin', I don't know where Jacob's eyes was, I'm sure, to choose that fat lump Rebekah, when Ethel was ready to drop into 'is arms."

"Ah, he gets more with Rebekah than 'e would ever 'ave got with Ethel, you may be quite sure. And talkin' of that, Mrs. Podner, did you 'appen to 'ear what Mr. Lion is givin' Rebekah when she's married?"

"I did 'ear five 'underd," Mrs. Podner replied in a confidential voice. "And cheap, too, for such

a son-in-law, if 'e didn't want 'is daughter to die an old maid, and 'ave to keep 'er all 'er life."

I wandered about the room for a minute and found myself talking to a gentleman who told me his name was Prince, after having asked me my own.

"Ah, you're a friend of Isaacs," he said. "I saw you come in with him, I think."

I informed him that I acted as Mr. Isaacs' professional adviser.

"By all accounts, he wants one pretty often," he commented, thus showing me that Isaacs and his methods were not altogether a sealed book to Mr. Prince.

Taking the opportunity of congratulating him on his son's engagement, I discovered that he was anything but pleased with it.

"What's done's done," he remarked sourly. Then rising to his feet, he came close up to me.

"Have you seen my son?" he asked, in an almost angry voice, looking at me over his spectacles.

I said I had.

"Well, have you seen Miss Lion?" he continued with a certain ferocity.

I told him I had had the pleasure of being introduced to her.

"Then if you've seen 'em both, you've got to admit there ain't much to congratulate me or him on, is there?"

Without waiting to hear my reply, and much to my relief, he went on: "You go and congratulate Lion. He's the one who's chucklin' over this business, believe me."

Isaacs joined us at that moment, at the same

time signalling a friendly greeting across the room to a newly arrived young girl, who was laughing a welcome back at him. Prince tapped him on the shoulder to compel his attention.

"I was just sayin', Isaacs, that a boy like Jacob could 'ave married——" He hesitated, not quite knowing on what high rung in the social scale to place his son.

"Say, a duchess," Isaacs suggested.

Mr. Prince regarded him with a cold stare, perceiving that Isaacs was "pulling his leg," as he would have phrased it, and said no more.

Isaacs changed the topic by asking if Mr. Prince was willing to play a game of auction after supper.

Mr. Prince brightened up at that idea.

"I'd like to," he said. "It'd 'elp to pass the evening. Would your friend 'ere make one?" He pointed his finger at me as he asked the question.

I explained that I was not a card-player.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Don't play cards!" His tone suggested a shock, as if I had told him I was going to supper in pyjamas; I felt I had gone down in his estimation. "Why, whatever do you do with yourself in the evenings?" he asked, his expression suggesting I must be mildly insane.

"I read sometimes, or go to a concert. . . ."

But he was not listening. He had lost whatever little interest he may have had in me. I did not play cards! I was a mere clod upon the surface of the earth, occupying a space that might have been much more worthily filled. He turned to Isaacs.

"Have a look round, Isaacs," he said. "Only don't ask Lion; I'm sick of him, after all the



trouble we've had getting him up to our figure for Jacob. And—don't ask Rosenfelt—that chap talkin' to Sanberg—he won't play more'n tenpence a hundred."

"What about Hirschfelt?" Isaacs asked, directing his gaze to a paunchy individual who was sitting on a chair with a heavily ringed hand spread on either knee to show them off to the best advantage.

"Yes, he'll do, so long as he won't keep layin' his stinkin' cigarette down on the table, and 'alf blindin' me with the smoke."

Isaacs went over to the bejewelled gentleman.

"Have you ever noticed," said Mr. Prince, "how the smoke of a cigarette left on the table will follow you about, whichever side of it you may be sitting?"

I said I had, having been often annoyed by it.

"I don't know what that chap Hirschfelt wants to smoke at all for," he went on complainingly. "All he does is to light a cigarette and then he puts it down to burn away by itself. I believe he does it on purpose to annoy the man he's playin' against, I do indeed."

Isaacs came back with the information that Hirschfelt would "make one" after supper. He then took me off to be introduced to the younger sister of the engaged lady, a very pretty and vivacious girl. I thought it a matter for surprise that Jacob should have chosen the elder, and said so to Isaacs, who agreed.

"You're right," he said. "Rebekah'd never 'ave got awf if it 'adn't a-been for the shot-ger. And, talkin' of the devil, 'ere 'e comes," he added,

## MR. AND MRS. LION RECEIVE 107

as a short, round-shouldered, wizened man with obviously dyed whiskers made his way towards us.

“‘Ere, Mirzbach,” Isaacs called to him. “Just a tic.”

Mr. Mirzbach shuffled forward on corn-crippled feet, glancing first at Isaacs and then at me, and smiling rather obsequiously.

“‘This is my friend,” Isaacs said to him in none too friendly a manner. “My lawyer,” he added, his voice almost conveying a threat.

“Glad to meet you, sir,” Mirzbach said in broken English, washing his hands in air—a quite inadequate element, judging by their appearance.

“‘This is the gentleman who brought awf the engagement,” Isaacs said. “And a nice bit ‘e makes out of it, too.”

I felicitated Mr. Mirzbach on his success.

“All in der vay of peeze,” he replied. “I arranges der engagements mitout takin’ no responsibility for der ‘appiness of der parties; dat’s deir affair,” he said, expressing his indifference to the future by a sustained shrug of the shoulders. Then with the love of his race for talking upon their particular calling, he went on: “But vat a job it is sometimes. . . . Take dis affair.”

He looked at the young couple behind him. Then in a half-confidential whisper he continued:

“Dis vas der ‘ardest case I’ve ‘ad for years! Undt can you vonder at it?” he sighed. “Look at ‘er!” His shoulders went up again, carrying his outspread hands with them.

“Undt den, mind you, after all my vork, der oldt man—der fader—vants to beat me down mit der commissions. Always der poor shot-ger gets done at der finish.”

He sighed again, and turned to go; changed his mind and returned to the subject.

"Undt ven I toldt 'im she looked not a day less dan forty, undt 'e ought to be glad to pay double, 'e rushes up to me mit der 'ands to my face as if my viskers to pull out 'e vas going. After me gettin' rid of 'er for 'im so cheap!"

He spoke as if the young lady were a job lot of millinery.

"Match-making must be a difficult profession, Mr. Mirzbach," I observed.

"Der most awfullest in der vorld," he replied with much feeling. "Undt for vy? I tells you. It's only der ugly vuns vat comes our vay. No vun wants a shot-ger for a nice-lookin' young girl; dey're too scarce. Though even dey 'as to be got off young—vile der peach is on der bloom"—he smiled at his excursion into poetry. "Else," he continued, as he described large curves in the air to illustrate his meaning, "dey gets on der large size, like 'er," and then looked at Miss Lion with an expression of having disposed of old, unsaleable stock.

"Why don't you get Isaacs married?" I asked him in jest. "He's young, and ought to be a client of yours."

"Dat's true," he agreed. He looked round to see if he were in sight, and said confidingly: "But 'e's such a 'ard case. I told 'im of a very nice young lady—only twenty-nine. 'Er fader vould 'ave put down a lot o' gelt to get 'er off, but Isaacs vouldn't be caught, nohow."

During his recital he had been gradually coming closer to me, so close, indeed, that I thought it

advisable to retire a pace, as I asked him why Isaacs had not been willing to fall in with his views.

"'E vas dreadful offhand," he replied. "Ven I took 'im round to der 'ouse 'e didn't stay ten minutes; said 'e 'ad a peezeness appointment vich couldn't vait. Undt ven I asked 'im vy 'e vent off mit such a rush, 'e said 'e vasn't 'ookin' up mit a female ladder mit a glass eye."

He was commencing to edge towards me again, so I put out my hand to prevent him, as I asked:

"And was the lady really so thin?"

"She vas rader on der slender side of t'ings," he confessed. "Isaacs said she vas so thin dat if she met 'im in der 'all undt der gas vas only 'alf on, 'e'd think 'er shoulder vas a 'at peg, and dat 'e'd find 'imself kissin' der 'at stand by mistake." His voice rang with genuine pathos as he added: "Undt I should 'ave got a 'underd pound if Isaacs 'ad only peen sensible."

As a last resource he suggested I should use my influence in the matter, and when I told him it was outside my province, he left me to join two young men at the further end of the room in the hope of interesting them in the thin lady whom Isaacs had scorned.

Supper being announced, we found our way in a go-as-you-please fashion to the dining-room downstairs, where the guests seated themselves haphazard, the girls, however, using feminine devices to keep the chair on one side of them for their particular fancy of the male gender. In this they were assisted by the elderly folk, who acquiesced very graciously in their innocent subterfuges.

I found myself between two matrons on whose

expansive bosoms and fingers reposed a profusion of jewellery. Between them, they appeared to possess a sample of every known precious stone from amethysts to diamonds. When we were all seated, I noticed that other ladies were adorned in the same manner, and that those on one side of the table were very interested in the dress of those occupying the opposite seats.

Conversation was general and seemed in no way to affect the healthy appetites of the guests. To me, the meal lasted an interminable time, but at last, the wants of nature being satisfied, the laughter and chatter ceased as an elderly gentleman by the name of Stuntz (a very old friend of the family) rose to make a speech. He was a tall, thin, rather distinguished-looking man with bushy eyebrows and a grey beard; he might have been a professor at a university.

"Mein friends," he commenced, and paused for inspiration.

"Who are you a-calling names?" interrupted a would-be facetious youth, to the giggling amusement of the girl beside him, for whose benefit the question had been asked.

The speaker calmly regarded the youth, and with severe dignity reproached him.

"Young man, if you don't know how to behave in der gompany of laties undt gentlemen, you'd better stay away der next time you're asked to der barty. Dat's vat I tell you, Mr. Springbaum."

Mr. Springbaum tried to appear indifferent to the rebuke, smoking rather quickly to cover his confusion.

"Mein friends," Mr. Stuntz began again, all

eyes now being turned upon him, "it gives me der greatest pleasure to be at der engagement celebration of my young friend, Miss Rebekah Lion. Ven I t'ink it is fourteen years ago since I vas at her young brother's Bar-mitzvah (confirmation) party——"

"Ten," corrected Mrs. Lion, desirous of concealing the real age of the lady.

"Fourteen," insisted Mr. Stuntz firmly. "I know it vas fourteen, because in dat year I got my discharge——"

"Where from?" another youth asked jocularly.

Mr. Stuntz, unused to interruptions, was unable to ignore the insinuation.

"Vere from, young man?" he said, turning to the direction from which the voice had come, but unable to locate the culprit. "Vere from? Not from der place you know most about; not from der place vich you'll very likely die in. No, sir!" he went on dramatically, rather pleased at his repartee. "From a honourable bankruptcy brought on through an unfortunate fire. Dat's vere from!"

He looked round the room with the challenging air of a successful gladiator, but as no one took up the challenge, and having by this time recovered his equanimity, he went on with his toast:

"Undt now, 'ere is my little Rebekah ready to give 'er 'and and 'eart to Mr. Jacob Prince. It is my great pleasure to congratulate his fader——"

"Don't congratulate me!" Mr. Prince said in a churlish voice, repeating what he had said to me an hour earlier. "Congratulate Lion."

The tone of this remark, coupled with the impli-

cation, was too much for Mrs. Lion, who faced him with angry eyes, demanding:

“What do you mean by that, Mr. Prince?”

“What do I mean by it?” repeated Mr. Prince, quite willing to do battle for his opinions. “I mean what I say. If there’s any congratulations bein’ thrown about, let Lion ’ave ’em; I don’t want ’em.”

Mr. Stuntz remained standing while this war of words was taking place. It was useless to continue his speech, as by this time everybody was talking to a neighbour in an agitated manner, looking from Mr. Prince to Mr. Lion and back again from Mr. Lion to Mr. Prince.

The friends of the Lions’ were affronted and indignant, and those of the Princes’ were agreeing, in undertones, with the implication expressed by Mr. Prince.

“I’ve never been so insulted in all my life,” said Mrs. Lion tearfully, seeking sympathy from her particular friends.

Miss Lion took refuge in tears, while Jacob sought, in a half-hearted way, to console her.

Ethel, her youngest sister, championed Rebekah’s cause to the youth next to her, saying it was a shame her sister’s party should be spoilt by that “old beast of a Prince.”

Mrs. Passov, the lady whose daughter had been jilted by Jacob, rose at this moment, and looking across the table at the young man amidst a general hubbub began to express her opinion of him in unmeasured terms. Before she had said very much, her feelings fortunately overcame her, and she collapsed into her seat, shaking with anger and tears, much to the detriment of her complexion.

## MR. AND MRS. LION RECEIVE 113

Mr. Lion, torn by various emotions, glared at Mr. Prince, who sat drumming his fingers on the tablecloth, obviously uncomfortable at the storm his words had aroused.

To have told Mr. Prince what he thought of him, Mr. Lion would have given—almost, not quite—the stud he wore in his collar. (He had foregone wearing a tie so that the glory of the diamond should not be hidden.) He dare not, however, for fear the engagement, arranged after so much difficulty, should be broken through a family quarrel, with the consequent result that the scandal would be voiced all over the neighbourhood, and his daughter's chance of finding another fiancé reduced to nil. He therefore unwillingly held his peace.

Mr. Stuntz determined to make one more attempt to speak. He raised his voice in an endeavour to throw oil on the sea of acrimonious, disputatious talk in progress.

“Mein friends,” he said, “I vas goin’ on to say——”

“Ve don’t vant to ’ear no more,” chipped in Mr. Mirzbach, the marriage-broker, seeing possible danger of wreck to the ship of his hard-earned commission.

It was left to Isaacs—the ready-witted, glib-tongued Isaacs—to leap into the breach of discontent and save a precarious state of affairs from downright disaster.

“Yes, we do,” he said in a loud tone of voice, as he sprang to his feet, drawing the attention of the company. “I know what Mr. Stuntz was goin’ to say, if you’d only ’ad the perliteness to listen.



He was goin' to congratulate Mr. Prince on 'avin' lived to see 'is son grow up into such a 'andsome, well-built young man, wiv such fine business talents. Ain't that it, Stuntz?" he said, looking at the latter, and hoping he would take the hint.

"Dat vas it! Dat vas it!" Mr. Stuntz said, grasping with gratitude the point Isaacs had put into his mouth.

"Oh, if that's it, it's different," Mr. Prince said, in a mollified tone. "Then why didn't you say so?"

"'E's a foreigner," Isaacs replied for Stuntz. "That's why it takes 'im a bit longer to get his ideas awf 'is chest."

Seeing with alert perception that he had retrieved a difficult situation, Isaacs followed up his success by saying: "And now, ladies and gentlemen, let's all raise our glasses to Miss Rebekah Lion and 'er fi-ancy Mr. Jacob Prince, and wish 'em all they wish themselves. And all I 'ope is, that when the weddin' day arrives, they won't forget me when the invites is sent out for it. 'Ere's to 'em!"

And as he raised his glass and looked at the young couple, he was followed by the whole company.

The trouble that a few minutes before had bid fair to spoil the evening, subsided as rapidly as it had arisen.

Miss Lion gazed with admiration at her fiancé as he rose to make a few halting remarks in response to the toast, everybody being relieved that the storm had passed away.

"What about that game at auction, Isaacs?"

## MR. AND MRS. LION RECEIVE 115

Mr. Prince called across the table to him, being anxious to get on with his little nightly gamble.

"All fixed up," Isaacs replied. "Ready when you are."

Mrs. Lion, glad of the diversion in the conversation, took the hint, and, rising from the table, was followed by the ladies, who retired upstairs to tittivate themselves, and a little later when they came down, I took advantage of the opportunity to make my adieu to my hostess.

Next time I saw Isaacs, I asked him if Mirzbach had settled with him.

"Oh, that," he said. "I should think 'e did. Wasn't it me who put 'im on to Jacob Prince? Should I do it wivout gettin' somethink? Not much. I want my lawful rights.

The night o' the party, after you'd gone, I asked 'im what 'e thought of you, and 'e said you'd got a nasty 'ard face. And I told 'im that's why you're my lawyer. 'And,' I ses to 'im, 'e's the 'ottest 'and at cross-examination in London. 'Pon my sam, Mirzbach, I'd give up my share of the commission to see 'im put you through it in the witness-box wiv a few facts I could put 'im up to.' 'E settled all right. Nice evenin', wasn't it?"

## CHAPTER X

### ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER

**I** SAACS switched off from the subject we had been discussing with that swiftness of thought which was one of his chief characteristics. He was perpetually a "live wire," and perhaps the extraordinary speed of thought and the continual necessity of being on the alert to avoid the pitfalls laid for him by other "razor-edge" people of the same type accounted for the thinness of his body, which never seemed to be sufficiently fed or cared for. The little dry cough told me his chest was the weakest part of his frame.

"Ever 'eard o' Sherlock 'Olmes?" I nodded.

"Clever feller that," he went on after a short pause. "Dead, ain't 'e?"

"He never lived," I said. "He was a character in fiction created by a well-known author.

He didn't quite grasp my meaning, so I explained in different language. When he had taken it in, he sat still thinking a short time. Then:

"D'you mean to tell me that some one invented all them stories I've been 'earin' about? Invented the plot, and then invented the way to track the murderers, or catch the thieves, and so on?" I nodded again.

"Well then, I'll tell yer what you've got to do; you've got to interdooce me to him, and I'll make 'is fortune for 'im. Yours too, when what I've got to propose comes awf."

## ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER 117

I smiled at the thought of the juxtaposition of two such widely different entities, and asked how the El Dorado was to be brought forth.

"It's like this," he said. "If a man could think of all them tricks, what's to prevent 'im doin' them for 'imself? Wiv 'elp. Such as I could give 'im. It's wastin' time writin' them down when all 'e's got to do is to lay out a scheme, and wiv my assistance—me lookin' after the swag, or—er—disposin' of it to—er—likely buyers—makin' a fine profit, and then dividin' a fair 'alf to each. I wouldn't even charge 'im anythink for my expert knowledge as to where to place it. What d'you think o' that?" he asked, with an expression indicating keen desire for my acceptance of the idea.

His tobacco-stained fingers pulled nervously at his moustache in an endeavour to draw some of the too short hairs between his teeth: to bite something besides his finger-nails, for a change.

I mentioned the impossibility of such a thing, as I did not know the author in question: it was not necessary to adduce any other reason.

"That's a pity," he said. "It might 'ave been a good thing for you. 'E'd like to know me. I'm one of the sort 'e could work wiv, 'cause I've been doin' a bit in 'is line myself lately."

I raised my eyes interrogatively.

"Yes," he continued, "and brought awf a move good enough for old 'Olmes."

"Was it a profitable piece of business?" I asked.

His face took on a charitable expression.

"Yes, it was, but it wasn't started wiv that idea." For once I felt he was really genuine. He went on: "I know you think I'm a 'opeless wrong

'un; you, not bein' a business man, don't understand 'ow merchants like me 'ave to think and contrive things to make a—honest livin'. But in this case, you'd be wrong. I never meant to make money out o' this transaction.

It's about old Judah Bolinsky and his wife, who keep the little jewellery repairin' shop in that narrow street behind the Palace Theatre. 'E's the sort o' man who's a disgrace to the Jewish persuasion. Kind o' man who bolted from Russia thirty years ago to save goin' into the army, and who knows no more to-day than the day 'e landed. All 'e's learnt is the language, and, I must say, 'e's picked that up fine. So's 'is wife. They both speak English almost as well as me. But simple! simple as a baby. 'E'd believe what's wrote on the label of a bottle o' patent med'cine; 'e would, straight.

Which all comes o' their livin' alone over that shop o' theirs and not mixin' up wiv any o' their own people, who'd 'ave taught 'em things.

Not that 'e could learn much good from the low-class Russians who live in that quarter, 'cause all they do is to 'old meetin's to do away wiv the Emperor. And now 'e's gone, I suppose they'll 'old more meetin's to get rid o' them what's in power. As for the I-talians—ever get a whiff o' their breath as they pass? I only 'ope the poison gas the Germans use ain't like the smell of their sausages, or Gawd 'elp the poor English soldiers, if it catches 'em wivout their masks.

But there's plenty o' Yidden in the neighbourhood, and if 'e'd mixed wiv 'em 'e'd a got to know some o' the tricks the artful ones are always gettin' up for such as 'im. And 'is wife's just as bad.

## ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER 119

Will yer believe me when I tell yer a chap come into the shop once wiv a gal 'e was goin' to marry, and she let 'im 'ave a weddin' ring on tick! Of course, she never saw 'im again! And when I blew 'er up all she could say was, 'Well, David, I remember my own weddin' day, and when I saw the young woman was in trouble, and the young man said 'e was willin' to get married at once, only they couldn't, 'cause he only 'ad enough money to pay the minister, what could I do?' She ought to be sellin' curtain rings, not weddin' rings, and I told 'er so.

This comes o' livin' thirty years in London, and never movin' out of it, except for one day, when they shut the shop up and went for a 'bus ride to Eppin' Forest and back.

Go past the place any day, and you'll see old Judah sittin' in the window wiv a magnifyin' glass in 'is eye, repairin' a lot o' rubbishy trinkets brought in by the I-talian and French women, who 'aggle and argue an hour as to whether they're to be charged eightpence or ninepence for the job. And Judah gives way every time. That's what I mean when I say 'e's a disgrace to the people 'e belongs to. 'E don't know enough to come in out o' the wet!

All 'e thinks of is the Jews in Russia, his native town, and the people 'e left behind—most of 'em 'dead long ago, I expect. And if you find fault, all you'll get out of 'im, is, 'I'm savin' up, David, savin' up for Miriam and me to go back. It won't be long, 'cause everybody's safe there now, and free. No more slaughterin' of the Jewish people, no more stealin' their goods. It'll be the same as

'ere, all equal; all able to go on their business and not be afraid that round the corner is some one 'waitin' to stab 'em and rob 'em, and burn their 'ouses down after stealin' whatever's worth takin'. Ah! But that will be good! We shall end our days in Lodz among our old friends, David. You're young; you don't understand. But one day, you will; yes, yes, you'll understand one day, believe me.'

That's 'ow 'e talks. Fancy wantin' to go back to Russia!"

"But you told me once, Isaacs," I said, "that you're Russian yourself——"

"Only while the war's on, take it from me. If I was over there now, I'd 'ave a big placard printed and pinned on me back, and the only word on it'd be 'ENGLISH.'

Now I'm goin' to tell yer 'ow I saved 'im from trouble.

One day I was in the little parlour behind the shop talkin' to Mrs. Bolinsky and makin' 'er laugh. Lookin' through the glass window of the door, I saw a man come in and talk to Judah, who got up from 'is repairin' to serve 'im. Such a swell 'e looked! Tall, dark, well built, wiv a short pointed beard and a military moustache; gloves on 'is 'ands, and a gold-mounted stick. Just as if 'e'd stepped out of a fashion plate, wiv a silk topper you could see to do yer 'air in.

I can't tell yer what it was, but when I saw 'is face, there was something in it what made me listen to what was goin' on. I 'ad a funny feelin' come over me. I couldn't 'elp fancyin' 'e was like some one I knew, only I couldn't place 'im. Whatever it

## ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER 121

was, I felt I 'ad to 'ear what they was talkin' about, though, as it turned out, there was nothin' in it.

'E took a watch awf 'is watch chain, laid it on the counter, and said 'e wanted it repairin'.

Judah stuck 'is glass in 'is eye, opened the back of the watch, and after examinin' it, said the spring was broke, and also it wanted cleanin' bad, as it was very dirty. 'E was goin' on to say 'ow much it'd cost to be put into workin' order, when the gent said that didn't matter, as 'e wanted it well done, and 'e would call for it in a week or so. When Judah offered to send it 'ome, 'e said 'e was stayin' at the Ritz and preferred to call, as it might get broke by the messenger, or the boy might 'ave it stole from 'im.

'There's a customer for yer!' Judah ses, when the gent 'ad left the shop. 'Der cost don't matter, and 'e didn't even take a receipt. And look at der watch! That watch was never turned out under, at least—forty pounds! And 'e never took a receipt! What do you think o' that, Miriam?

'Oh,' she ses, 'e's like the rest of the English nobility. I've read somewhere they're all so rich and so careless, 'e might easy forget 'e'd left it 'ere at all.'

'I wish 'e would, Judah,' I ses, 'then you'd be able to afford to 'ave a paint up outside; it wants it bad enough.'

'But, Miriam, you don't see der importance of this piece of business. Such a rich man 'as never been in der place! Who knows! If I please 'im, 'e may bring still more things to be repaired. 'E may even recommend me to 'is rich friends.'



'Yes, dat's true, Judah,' 'is wife ses, catchin' on to the point.

Next time I called in, Judah was all over me.

'Oh, David, it's as I told you and Miriam. You remember dat gentleman who brought me der watch to repair? 'E come and fetch it der other day, and what d'you think? 'E brought me another also to make der repairs on, 'e was so pleased with der way I did der first.

'E stopped talkin' to me a long time, ever so long. Told me der reason 'e brought me der watch to repair was because 'e saw a Jewish name outside der door, and said, 'e is one of us 'imself. Not an English noble as we thought. When I knew 'e was one of us we naturally got friendly, and I told 'im 'ow I want to get back to Poland to end my days there. 'E said if there was anything 'e could do to 'elp, 'e'd be glad as 'e's a Pollak 'imself. Think o' that! 'Im a Pole, like me! And 'e proved it. 'E spoke to me in my own language. Comes in nearly every day and 'as a talk in der language I learnt from my mother. Der sound of it brings tears to my eyes, for wasn't it der language I courted you in, Miriam?' 'e ses, turnin' to 'is wife.

Funny old pair they are," Isaacs said. "When 'e asked 'er that, she got up from 'er chair and went to where 'e was sittin' and played wiv the little 'air what's left on the top of 'is 'ead, and kissed 'is face, while 'e drew 'er 'and over 'is shoulder and stroked it as if they was twenty.

While they was doin' their lovin' act, the shop door opened, and the same gent walked in and took a seat. Judah went out to say 'Good-day' and they

## ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER 123

shook 'ands most friendly. 'E pulled out a gold cigarette case, which made my mouth water, and offers a cigarette to Judah. Then they gabs away in their own language, which worried me 'cause I couldn't understand a word.

'What are they talkin' about?' I asked Mrs. Bolinsky.

'Sh-h-h!' she ses, listenin' wiv all 'er ears. 'Wait till 'e's gone, and Judah'll tell you.'

Whatever it was, I could see Judah was excited 'cause 'e fidgeted on 'is chair like a little gal at a party waitin' to be asked to 'ave another bit o' cake, and, of course, seein' this, made me want to know what they was gabbin' about more than ever. I thought 'e would never go, and I smoked a packet o' 'lung slayers' while 'e was there. The more I looked at 'is face, the more I 'ad the feelin' I 'ad met 'im. And yet, I thought, it couldn't be, 'cause I don't mix wiv 'is kind. All the same I couldn't get rid o' the idea.

Directly 'e'd gone, Judah come into the parlour as excited as a man who's backed a winner.

'Did you 'ear, Miriam?' 'e ses to 'is missis. 'Did you 'ear what 'e said?'

'Oh, Judah,' she ses, 'alf cryin', 'can it be der trut'?''

But I was so keen to know what it all meant, I butts in wiv: 'Well, what did 'e say? Tell me.'

'Did you see 'is gold cigarette case?' 'e asks me. 'And 'is gold match-box?' 'e ses, lookin' at me wiv eyes as big as a watch glass. 'It seems as if everything 'e 'as is made o' gold! And the wonderful stories 'e tells me! My 'ead swims wiv 'em.'

'Tell me,' I ses. 'Let me 'ear some of 'em,' gettin' as stirred up as 'e was.

'Don't speak for a minute, Judah. 'Ave a rest to calm yourself,' 'is wife ses. 'Wait, I'll get you a drink o' water. It isn't good for you. Sit a little while still, now.' And she bustled away to get a glass and some water.

After 'e'd 'ad a drink, 'e ses: 'David, that man is a wonder! That's what 'e is, a wonder! 'E come over 'ere as poor as me, and is now so rich 'e goes back to Poland to buy a castle and live retired, like a nobleman.'

'Well, that won't do you any good as far as I can see,' I ses, feelin' a bit disappointed, after all their workin' up.

'Ah, but listen,' 'e ses. 'That ain't all. 'Ow d'you think 'e's made so much money, eh?'

'P'raps by layin' the odds,' I ses. 'Not by *backin'* 'orses, I'll swear.'

Judah looked at me as if I'd insulted a lady.

'Nothing like that, David. Something much cleverer. 'E's in what 'e calls in French "'awt finongs," which means in English, "'igh fi-nance."'

'On the Stock Exchange?' I asks.

'No, on the money exchange, and 'e makes 'underds and thousands as easy as 'e talks. And 'e's goin' to make my fortune for me,' Judah ses, smilin' all over 'is poor old simple face.

'Why?' I asks, not understandin' why strangers should come in to a little shop-keeper wiv a wand, which only 'as to be waved to make 'im wealthy. That's all right in Cinderella and Aladdin, but when you've growed older than ten, all the fairies

## ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER 125

you believed in up to then, and who used to visit yer regular in bed, suddenly seem to 'ave moved into a different part o' the world.

'Why is 'e goin' to make my fortune?' Judah ses, answerin' me. 'I'll tell you. Because we come from der same part of Poland, and 'e knows, 'cause I've told 'im 'ow I've saved and saved to go back there wiv Miriam to live the rest of our lives among our old friends,' 'e ses, takin' 'er 'and in 'is and pressin' it as if it was as soft as it was when 'e first met 'er, and 'adn't got 'ard in the palm wiv 'ard work.

'Did you tell 'im 'ow much you've saved?' I asked, simple like.

'Yes, I've told 'im; I 'ad to, so's 'e could see what was der best way of investin' it for me.'

'Ow's 'e goin' to invest it?' I asked, gettin' as full of suspicion as a 'bus is o' passengers on a wet night.

'It's like dis, David,' 'e ses, 'I never knew of it till 'e showed it to me in der paper——'

'Showed yer what?' I asks.

'Der rate of der money exchange, and 'ow easy it is if you know 'ow, and 'ave der cash, to make money. Take a rouble——'

'What's that?' I asks, not knowin' whether it was a place or a complaint.

'—Russian money,' 'e ses. 'A rouble before der war was worth about two shillin's.'

'Well?' I ses, wonderin' what that 'ad to do wiv money makin'.

'Don't get so shirty with me, David,' 'e ses, blowin' 'is nose wiv excitement, and not knowin' 'e was doin' it. 'Let me explain, 'cause I see now

what to do. To-day, the rouble's only worth in the neighbourhood of ninepence, see?'

'Why's that?' I asks 'im, bein' still in the dark, and not knowin' where 'e was takin' me.

'I can't tell yer why, but there it is in der paper—der *Times*—so it must be true.'

'And 'ow's that goin' to make your fortune?' I asks, not seein' any further.

'That's what 'e's shown me dis mornin'. I oughn't to tell you dis—I wasn't even to say a word to Miriam——'

Mrs. Bolinsky jumped to 'er feet at this; the idea of 'im 'avin' a secret from 'er was too much. She shouted at 'im:

'Not tell me! Not tell your wife of thirty years! Wait till I see 'im! I'll let 'im know dat Miriam Bolinsky can keep a secret as well as any man! Wouldn't I be tore to pieces rather dan say a word which would do 'arm to my 'usband?'

And she glared at Judah as if 'e 'ad robbed 'er of 'er weddin' ring, Judah glared back at 'er, sayin':

'Well, ain't I told you, though I said I wouldn't? The reason it 'as to be kept secret, is because if every one knew it, there'd be such competition as to leave no profit. That's why——'

'But if it's in the paper everybody can see it; there's no secret about that, yer know, Judah,' I ses.

'It's quite enough for me,' 'e ses, 'when a gentleman like 'im shows me der way to get rich, to do as 'e says.'

I kept very quiet, as, though I saw there was some dodge on, I 'adn't got the lay of it yet. I

## ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER 127

'ad to go slow wiv Judah, 'cause 'e was in that state o' mind, it was easy to rile 'im wiv a lot o' questions. I ses to 'im, pleadin' like:

'Tell me the secret, Judah; I won't give it away, I give yer my word. You wouldn't mind me makin' a bit too, would yer?'

'David,' 'e ses, solemn, 'I'd be glad to see yer make some money. I don't know 'ow yer live—I sometimes wonder. . . . You ain't got a regular job—you ain't got a shop—it's a mystery where you gets der money you always seem to 'ave. . . . But there, it ain't my affair, but I'm goin' to tell yer der secret, so's you also can make something. It's like dis. First I go to the bank and draw out my savin's, see?'

'And give it to 'im?' I asks, thinkin' I was, as the kids say, 'gettin' warm.' But 'e shook 'is 'ead.

'No, no; 'e don't touch der money. That shows there's no trick. When I go to der bank and 'ave got the money, I tell 'em I want to buy rouble money to transfer to Russia. For my six 'underd pound I shall be able to get near eighteen 'underd roubles, so by der time I get to Russia, I'm three times better off. Or, suppose I don't go. I transfer der money over dere, and I wait a few weeks till der rouble's got to a better value; den I transfer it back again to London, and make a profit that way. Only not so much. 'E'll watch der Exchange and tell me when to buy, and when to change it again into der English money. Ain't it easy, when yer know 'ow?' 'e ses, 'is sperrits risin' at the thought o' bein' a millionaire almost.

And while the old man was talkin', it come to me in a flash who the rich man was, only I said nothin'

about it to Judah, 'im bein' so wropped up in 'im.

I pretended to agree wiv 'im, but made 'im promise faithful, 'e'd not do any buyin' till I'd made some enquiries, and as 'is wife backed me up, I knew 'e'd keep 'is word.

Next day I went into a bank and asked to see the manager, who received me very affable.

When I told 'im I thought of investin' money in Russian roubles, 'e strongly advised me not to, unless I 'ad to pay out money over there. I told 'im I wanted to speculate on the rise and fall of the Exchange, and 'e laughed. 'E said if money was to be made that way, the City'd be in it and get all the profit there was to get; and the banks, too, might 'ave a little flutter, though it was not their practice to gamble.

I told 'im I'd been advised by a 'igh financeer I could make a nice bit o' money by doin' it. And 'e laughed again.

'If any 'igh finan-ceer's told you you can make money that way, 'e must be so 'igh up in fi-nance as to be in the clouds. If I was you, I should recommend your friend to see a doctor. A brain specialist'd be the best for 'is complaint.'

So I thanked 'im and said I'd bring a friend o' mine to see 'im on the matter, if 'e'd allow me.

'Do,' 'e ses, 'e'll be a curiosity worth knowin'. I'll interdooce 'im to our 'ead orfice; they're always on the search for a man who can teach 'em more'n they know.'

Next day, I took Judah and 'is wife to the bank, and after they'd 'eard the manager, they wasn't quite so keen on the 'igh financeer. Judah was very down'earted over it, but 'ad to admit there

## ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER 129

was something fishy which 'e couldn't explain. Mrs. Bolinsky said she'd come to the conclusion 'e wasn't a fortune maker at all.

'No,' I ses, 'e ain't so much a fortune maker as 'e is a fortune 'unter, take it from me.'

When we got 'ome I told Judah a bit I knew of the gent, and I promised if 'e'd do as I told 'im I'd show 'im 'ow we could all make a little splosh out o' this artful young feller.

After I'd 'ad my talk it was agreed Judah should act as I wanted 'im; 'e was to foller my plans exact. I meant 'avin' a bit out o' this business by this time, I tell yer. Only not at the expense o' Judah; I didn't want to touch any of the cash 'e'd put by, scrapin' shillin's together one by one, lookin' through that spy-glass of 'is for thirty years until 'e was 'alf blind.

'Avin' been in all sorts o' business of the same kind, I felt cocksure I'd got on to the game of this kind-'earted gent who was goin' to make the Bolinskys rich for nothin', and so thought it best to explain what it was to them.

Next day, in comes my lord 'igh financeer, and 'im and Judah gets talkin' and laughin' and smokin' as usual. And Judah passes one of 'is cigarettes over to the Polish nobleman in disguise, sayin' they're some 'e's 'ad sent 'im by a relation in the trade.

'Very good they are, too,' ses my nibs, patronisin' like, after 'e'd lit one and was blowin' the smoke through 'is 'igh-bred nose. 'Very good, indeed, and I shall 'ave to send 'im an order for some of 'em,' 'e ses, tellin' Judah at the same time, that he must be ready to draw 'is money by Tues-



day, 'as that's the day I'm goin' to deal,' 'e ses, 'avin' got advices from my agent in Russia the Exchange'd be lower on that day.'

Judah ses 'e'd be ready for sure, and then ses 'e'd rather, if the gent didn't mind, and would do 'im the favour, that 'e should take the money and do the business 'imself, as 'e knew so much more about it than Judah.

'Oh, I'll do it for yer wiv pleasure,' ses the rich man. 'And p'raps it would be better, 'cause I can get better terms than you from the banker. But do it yourself, if you prefer. Just as yer like—just as yer like,' 'e ses, as kind as the fox invitin' the chicken to come for a stroll out o' the run.

'I'd rather you did it,' ses Judah, playin' my game fine, me sittin' behind the door and not missin' a word, Judah only talkin' English by my orders.

On the Tuesday, in come my noble dook, better dressed than ever, wiv a diamond pin in 'is black tie, all O.K. I tell yer.

'Well, my friend, I've good news for yer,' 'e ses, 'I've 'ad a wire from my agent that if we do the deal to-day we shall make a 'andsome profit before the week is over, as the Exchange is bound to go up, owin' to the Russian Government sendin' large sums o' money to England to strike a balance. Isn't that splendid?' 'e ses, smilin' all over 'is face.

'Fine!' ses Judah. 'I am lucky to 'ave met you.'

They come to the back of the shop where there was two chairs and a bit more room to move.

When they was seated, the Russian Grand Dook ses: 'And are you ready wiv the cash, as promised?'

## ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER 131

'Quite ready,' ses Judah, pullin' out a roll o' bank-notes I'd lent 'im; you know, that sort the Bank of England ain't keen on changin'.

Then 'e got out 'is cigarette case, and give one to the Dook and took one of the Dook's at the same time. And Judah give 'im a light and then lit 'is own.

But, just as 'e'd done so, in comes Sully, my brother, who'd been watchin' through the window, so Judah goes forward to see what 'e wanted, takin' care to put the cigarette 'e'd took from the rich man on the counter, 'cause I'd told 'im most particular 'e was only to pretend to smoke it else 'e'd be doped for sure.

'I called to see if that brooch is ready I left last week to be repaired,' ses the customer.

'Quite ready, sir,' ses Judah, pretendin' not to know 'im, openin' the show case behind the counter, takin' the repair from it and wroppin' it up in a bit o' paper.

'Ow much?' asks Sully.

'One shillin' and sixpence, please,' ses Judah. 'Aven't you got anything less, sir?' ses Judah, as Sully 'ands 'im a pound note.

'I'm afraid I 'aven't,' 'e ses, feelin' in 'is pocket.

'Oh, I won't keep you a moment, then,' ses Judah, makin' to run upstairs. But thinkin' the real estate magnate might be able to oblige 'im 'e stopped and asked 'im.

Somehow, the 'igh financeer didn't seem to understand, as 'e took no notice, which wasn't surprisin' seein' 'e was smokin' one of the doped cigarettes I'd given to Judah. So Judah runs upstairs, and while 'e was gone, Sully come to the

back o' the shop, saw the foreigner of noble birth sittin' there asleep, and, will you believe me, took awf 'im 'is watch and chain, 'is tiepin, 'is sleeve links, 'is gold cigarette case, 'is gold match-box, and fourteen pound ten in notes. Also a very nice gold tooth-pick. Then wivout waitin' for the change, 'e bolted. Bolted! I never saw a man run so fast. Got away before I could get me breath to call 'stop thief!'

When Judah come down, findin' Sully 'ad gone 'e asks where 'e's gone to.

'I don't know,' I ses, ''e seems to 'ave forgot something, 'e rushed out of the shop so quick. And I must be awf, too, for I've got an important appointment. But I'll be back soon.'

And I cleared out at once.

I was only gone about 'alf an hour to give the dope time to work awf, but when I got back there was a terrible ullabulloo goin' on.

The foreign gent was abusin' poor old Judah something frightful. Said 'e'd been drugged, and 'is jewellery and money stole.

Judah was very upset, 'im not knowin' what 'ad took place while 'e was upstairs gettin' change; and 'is wife, 'earin' the noise, come down to see what it was all about.

'What it all means?' ses me lord, very 'igh and 'aughty. 'It means that unless my jewellery and money is give back to me at once, I'll send for the perlice. That's what it means.'

'The perlice!' I ses, takin' a 'and in the game for the first time. 'If you've been robbed, sir, that's what you ought to do. Why, there's one standin' at the corner; I saw 'im as I come in.

## ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER 133

I'll fetch 'im for yer,' I ses, as I started to go outside.

'Alf a moment, my good man,' ses the gent. 'I don't wish to make a fuss or get this—er—gentleman into trouble if I can 'elp it. We 'ave a little business together, but o' course I couldn't think o' continuin' till me money and jewellery's give back to me. I know this gentleman 'as money in 'is pocket, and if 'e chooses to give me a 'underd and fifty pounds, I'll say no more about it.' And 'e looks at Judah to see what sort of impression 'is words was makin' on 'im.

'Oh, won't yer!' I ses, my feelin's as an honest merchant gettin' the better of me. 'Oh, wont yer! Well, I don't know what you're goin' to do, but I ain't goin' to be a party to such dishonesty, I tells yer straight. I'm goin' for the perlice. You say you've been drugged,' I ses, 'I thought I smelt somethink o' that sort when I come in.' Then goin' to the counter where Judah 'ad laid the doped cigarette the rich customer 'ad give 'im, and which 'ad gone out, I brought it back and ses to Judah:

'Is that one o' your cigarettes?'

'No,' ses Judah; 'that's one o' this gentleman's, same as 'e's given me often.'

Then I lit it and the smell give it away at once.

'Oh,' I ses, 'you've been drugged, 'ave yer? Well, we'll see what the perlice 'as to say about it.'

'E tried to stop me, but before 'e could say a word, I slips out and brought back a constable who 'adn't moved from where I left 'im, which wasn't to be surprised at, seein' 'e was my cousin rigged up in a uniform I'd bought from a theatrical costumier.

'What's all this about?' ses the constable, lookin' at Judah severe.

'This gentleman says 'e's been robbed in my shop, Mr. Orficer, but I ain't took 'is things. It 'appened while I was upstairs gettin' change for a customer. I give you free permission to search der premises,' ses Judah, not too comfortable wiv an orficer in the shop. 'I'm a poor man,' 'e went on, 'but I've been 'ere thirty years and no one can say a word against me, dat I do know.' And the poor old chap come near breakin' down.

'Do you charge 'im, sir?' ses the orficer, turnin' to the wealthy gent from foreign parts.

'I'm thinkin' it over, orficer,' 'e ses, lookin' at Judah as if threatenin' that if 'e didn't 'and over the stuff 'ed ave im took up.

'Well, while you're thinkin' it over, what's yer name?' ses the orficer, takin' out 'is notebook and lickin' the point of the pencil.

'Baron Awstrich de Polony,' ses the gent who'd been robbed.

'No, not the one you flashes round the West End with—the real one, I want, if I'm to take the charge,' ses the orficer, lookin' at 'im very nasty. Then 'e goes on: 'The name I want is the one you give when I arrested yer for that jewel robbery at the South Brompton Hotel some years ago. I've forgot it for the moment. But they'll know it at Scotland Yard, I expect.'

'Ow dare you!' ses the Baron, glarin' at 'im to frighten 'im. Only it didn't 'ave no effect, for the orficer ses, sarcastic like:

'Oh, you'll report me, will yer? Well, my number's plain enough, I think, ain't it? Anyway, do

## ISAACS EXPOSES A SWINDLER 135

you charge 'im? That's what I want to know,' 'e ses, pointin' to Judah, who stood there wiv 'is wife, both of 'em bein' all of a tremble.

'I think not,' ses the 'igh financier. 'Not this time. I shall leave it to 'is conscience, and will call and see 'im later.'

'Well then, get awf the premises,' ses the orficer. 'And if I see you 'ere again, I shall take you up on suspicion, understand. I'm on dooty 'ere, and 'ave been for years, so come 'ere again, and you'll find yerself in quod quicker than you can change yer name. Now be awf!' 'e finishes up, givin' the 'igh and noble Baron a shove wiv 'is 'and which meant business.

And the rouble merchant went out very spry, and I ain't ever seen 'im since.

When 'e'd gone, the orficer went upstairs, and when 'e come down 'e was in plain clothes wiv 'is uniform done up neat in a brown paper parcel. All 'e did as 'e passed was to give me a wink."

After a pause, during which he went to the mirror to examine his appearance, Isaacs said:

"I'm very wild wiv old Judah Bolinsky, all the same. Silly old fool wouldn't take a penny as 'is share of the swag. Said 'e was only too thankful 'e 'adn't lost 'is life's savin's."

Isaacs walked towards the door, but as his hand went to the handle, he turned round, and coming back, he said:

"Now then, what'd d'you say to interdoocin' me to that bloke what made up them detective stories?"

And when I again said it was impossible, he went off, saying with deep conviction:

"Then you're missin' the chance o' yer life!"

## CHAPTER XI

### ISAACS IN DIFFICULTIES

**I**SAACS was in a ruminative mood. He sat gazing into my office fire as if he had been given a baffling problem to solve. This morning, his thin face had in it a little warmth which helped to relieve its dirty greyish tone; the pinprick, glinting eyes, not unlike those of a rat, were fixed and staring; his lips, usually so tightly drawn as to resemble two lines of dull red thread, were slightly open, disclosing a set of strong white teeth.

He had come to see me on a matter of debt-collecting. Having finished his business, instead of instantly commencing to chatter about his business experiences, he sat silent. Something had obviously upset him, but I left him alone, aware that with a person of his peculiar temperament it was the better course.

Presently, he startled me out of my letter-writing by ejaculating: "I wonder why some people's always botherin' themselves about Jews and their successes in business!"

"Do they?" I enquired, by way of encouraging him.

"Why, only the other night I was sittin' in a café in the Strand, and 'eard a woman askin' 'er 'usband, complainin' like, why the Jews always got on so well, and all that 'e could say was that 'e didn't know. Didn't know! As if there was

any answer but 'brains'! Take me, for instance. Can you fancy me bein' a policeman?"

I shook my head, avoiding the obvious answer.

"'F' course not; I ain't built for one. Why does an Irishman make a good bobby? The answer's easy. Look at his 'ands and feet—both made for the job. My Uncle Rottenbaum in Noo York says all the police there are Irish, all the tunnel-diggers I-talians, all the waiters Germans and Austrians, all the fruit-sellers Greeks, but that all the trades worth the name are owned by Jews.

'E says in 'is last letter to my old man, 'e can only laugh at them Jews who talk about goin' back to Jerusalem. Who're they goin' to do business wiv? They can't trade among themselves' they'd commence a deal at nine in the mornin', and at sunset they'll still be at it. Why, a quarter o' the town'd be took up wiv Government bankruptcy offices, and another quarter wiv a department to settle fire claims, 'cause no private company'd insure a whole town of Yidden. A risk like that'd turn the directors' 'air grey!

And the jealousy! My uncle says no Jew king'd last a month, and the old days, when the Jews got rid o' their kings by the easy means of a nail in the 'ead, wouldn't be in it. No Government'd insure the life of King Spieler the oomty oomph; it couldn't afford it."

"Does your uncle follow any particular line of business in New York?" I enquired.

"Particular business! I should say it *was* a particular line! It's so particular, 'e boasts that some of the goods 'ave been in i's store since 'e



opened it forty years ago. And the rule is that once a bronze, or a picture, or a bit o' furniture is dumped into stock, it's never dusted, or the cobwebs wiped awf, till some one comes in and takes a fancy to it. Then the old man looks at it wiv a lovin' eye, as if it was 'is favourite daughter leavin' 'im to get married to some one who'd made a 'ard bargain for 'er.

When the customer asks 'ow old it is, 'e stares at it wiv 'is 'ead a-one side for 'alf a minute, and says, very slow, that 'e couldn't say. It's been there ever since 'is grandfather's time, and most likely belonged to some o' the *Mayflower* people who got 'ard up and 'ad to sell it.

Anythink to do wiv the *Mayflower* fetches the rich Noo Yorker. Uncle ses 'e's 'eard people wiv names like 'Schnellerstein,' and noses like the figure '6,' talk about their ancstors 'who come in der *Mayflower* over.'

One day, my old man got a letter from 'im askin' 'im to go and see a firm about some pictures what 'ad to be shipped. The dad sent me, 'im bein' busy wiv a large remade clothin' order for South Africa. I put on my tokkuf (best) clothes so's to look important, and found the warehouse in a lane awf Wardour Street. No names was on the door, which was locked, and when I rang a bell, a slide in it opened, and a grumpy man asked me what I wanted.

'Called to see Mr. Angelo Noretta from Mr. Rottenbaum of Noo York,' I ses, very short and sharp, to let 'im see I was a client.

'Upstairs and ring the bell at the top,' 'e ses, openin' the door, as if I was an errand boy.

The smell of the turps, oils and acids inside the place nearly choked me, and I 'ad to stand still a minute to get my breath.

When the door opened and I could see Noretta through the different sorts o' smoke, I asked 'im: 'Where am I?' 'cause it looked more like the demon scene in a pantomime than a warehouse.

'You're in a fine art gallery,' 'e ses, laughin'. 'A gallery what 'as graced the walls of the Great in various parts o' the world.'

'Great what?' I asked, surprised.

'Well,' 'e ses, 'esitatin' and laughin' again, 'not exactly great men; say—great hoarders of ole masters.'

'Who's ole masters?' I asked, a bit muddled.

'Whose old masters! My ole masters, young man,' 'e answers, puffin' 'imself up like a canary before it goes to sleep.

'Oh,' I ses, not knowin' what to say. 'Well, all I know is, I've come from my uncle, Mr. Rottenbaum o' Noo York, to ask yere why you aint't sent awf 'is last order.'

'Quite so, quite so,' 'e ses, as calm as the sea at Margit in August. 'Would you like to see an ole master?' 'e went on. lookin' at me in a patronisin' sort o' way.

'Who is 'e?' I asked again, not understandin'.

'It isn't "who is 'e," as much as it is "who is them."'

'Well then, who's them?' I asked Noretta.

'They vary,' 'e ses, wipin' some varnish awf 'is fingers on to 'is apron. 'Old friends such as Muriller, Rembrant, Mik Angelo are always good stock, though the demand is variable.'

Feelin' altogether pudden-'eaded at not bein' able to understand 'im, I said, 'My uncle writes askin' when you're goin' to ship the two Gainsboroughs and the three Morlands—whatever they are. They've been in order three months now, and 'e ses it's time they was shipped.'

I spoke rather 'uffy, feelin' a bit annoyed at gettin' into a line I 'adn't got the 'ang of.

'Three months!' 'e ses, turnin' on me as if I'd insulted 'im. Then, as if he found it 'ard to get over the shock, 'e repeats: 'Three months! Does 'e suppose we can turn out Gainsboroughs and Morlands as if they was three-colour prints? Ole masters require time! Time, sir!' 'E looked at me as if I'd threatened to run awf wiv 'is wife. Calmin' down a bit, 'e went on: 'This is a most difficult profession to be in—most difficult.'

Pointin' to 'is bald 'ead, 'e ran on: 'Look at this!' 'E tapped it 'ard, makin' a sound like when you crack a 'ard-boiled egg. 'When I come into the Fine Art World, I 'ad an 'ead of 'air that'd make a barber want to murder me for it; that's twenty years ago.' 'E bent it down towards me. 'Now examine it, please. Can you see a single 'air on the top?'

I looked very 'ard, like as if I was 'untin' for a tanner in the dark.

'Two,' I ses. 'One nor'-east from the centre partin'—if there was anythink to part—the other, say, four inches down nearer the ear-hole.'

'You mean that?' 'e asks, excited. 'Then p'raps the roots 'ave been there all these years.' 'E was quite 'appy over what I'd told 'im.

'You see, it's like this,' 'e went on, smilin' at

the thought of the new crop of 'air which 'ad started. 'One day the public wants Rembrants; now what does that mean?' 'e asks, quizzing me like a schoolmaster.

I said as far as I was concerned, it was Dutch.

'That's it, my boy; that's what it is. Are you in the business?'

I shook my 'ead.

'No?' 'e asks. 'Well, then, I'll tell yer. Take Rembrant——' An' then 'e told me a lot o' stuff about 'emp canvases, oils and varnishes.

I listened wiv all my ears, wonderin' where 'e'd learnt all this, and 'ow I could learn it in case some day I wanted to take a 'and in the profession.

'Why, you're a regular ole master yerself, the way you talk,' I ses, lookin' at 'im wiv a complimentary eye.

'I'm a collection of ole masters, young man,' 'e replies. When 'e thought that 'ad soaked in, 'e added:

'Your Uncle Rottenbaum—I should change my name if I was 'im—as no business to try to 'urry me. Do you think if I could turn out a Rembrant in a month I wouldn't do it? Am I 'ere to throw away biz?'

'E waited for me to answer, but as I said nothink, 'e went on: 'Then again, you no sooner get yer 'and in on Rembrant the Dutchy, than the demand switches awf, sudden, on to, say, Raeburn the Scotchman. Look what an up'eaval to business! Why, the ladies' mantle trade, in which I was born, ain't in it for the changes of fashion!

One year a Raeburn's a drug in the market; the next, it'll jump up to eighteen——'

'Eighteen what?' I asks. 'Quids?'

'No, my friend; eighteen thousand guineas,' 'e answers, cool as a cod on a fish stall.

'Ow much!' I shouts, 'e took me so aback.

'That's nothin' surprisin',' 'e ses, wiv no more feelin' than if 'e was quotin' ready-made suits at thirty-nine and nine, carriage free.

I was simply staggered. After I'd collected myself, I asked I'm: 'Ow many do you say you can turn out a year?'

'E thought a short while, weighin' things up in 'is mind.

'I should say, at the outside, four or five, not more.'

'Well, then, in Gawd's name, why don't yer turn 'em out and retire?' I blurts out at 'im, to show 'im that if I didn't know anythink about art, I wasn't a muggins at business.

'Oh, the prices I mentioned's for the genuine one's—and in England. My goods ain't sold 'ere—only very occasional. The dealers know too much. Still, my ole masters want a bit o' knowin'. I'll show yer. Rogers!' 'e called to a man who was packin' near the window. 'Get down that special order Gainsborough, and put it in the light. . . . Come this way,' 'e ses to me, 'and I'll put before yer as beautiful a work of art as was ever turned out by any ole master. There!' 'e ses, pointin' to a dark mass o' paint in a frame. 'Look at that!' 'e ses, in the same way as 'e might if 'e'd set out before me a collar o' pearls all perfect in colour and shade.

I looked at it, tryin' to find out the subject.

'Is it upside down?' I asked 'im.

'My good man, certingly not!' 'E waved 'is 'and over the left side of it. 'Notice them trees,' 'e ses, pointin' to somethink what looked as much like trees as a cow looks like Sunday. 'Could anybody but Gainsborough paint trees like that?'

I looked at the smudge, and thought wiv a pot o' paint and a good big brush, I could, but I ses nothin'.

'Now, cast yer eyes over 'ere,' 'e ses, passin' 'is 'and over the right side of the daub. 'There is the true Gainsborough cottage!'

If 'e'd said 'There's the true Gainsborough dust-bin,' or 'There's the true Gainsborough manoor-eap,' 'e'd a-been no further awf as far as I was concerned, for all I could see was a splodge o' brown paint.

'E drew my attention to a gal reclinin' on nothin' as far as I could make out, after I'd examined it wiv a magnifyin' glass 'e lent me. Lookin' at it close, a good deal of ankle was plain, which, if they'd been mine, I should a-took care to 'ide; I've seen better ankles on the legs of Windsor chairs.

Rousin' myself from the stoopor I was in, I asked, 'Is this a part o' my uncle's order?' 'E give me a nod.

'And when are yer goin' to finish it?'

The look 'e give me showed what 'e thought o' me, but controllin' 'imself, 'e said: 'The picture, qway picture's finished. All's what's got to be done now's the crackin'. I'll show yer a picture ready for the market; cracks and all.'

'E brought one 'e called a Morland, all ready for shipment.

'See them cracks?' 'e asked. Considerin' the

whole thing was a mass of 'em in squares of about 'alf an inch, I was able to say I did.

'If I told you the secret o' makin' them cracks, young man, you'd 'ave in your possession information worth a fortune. That makes the real ole master; puts on the finishin' touch, see?'

By this time the various stinks 'ad so got into my throat, I asked 'im if 'e'd got anythink in the way of a gargle about the place. 'E took me into 'is orfice, and after we'd 'ad a drink, which 'ad a soothin' effect upon 'im, 'e said: 'Wonderful man your uncle is—a truly wonderful man. . . . Seems to smell out American millionaires who want ole masters, as easy as a cat does liver. These particular pictures is for a man named Schmoodle. Proprietor of 'Schmoodle's Mouth Wash and Rat Killer.' Made it first for 'is own use when 'e was a carriage cleaner on the Pennsylvanian Railroad. Now 'e's so rich, 'e owns the town it's made in, and, o' course, lives in Noo York, where 'e's built a mansion as near as possible to the Millionaire's Club which 'e can't get into.

That don't matter to Rottenbaum. (I do wish your uncle'd change 'is name; it's so unartistic.) 'E's got 'imself appointed 'ead for the Art Decoration Department of the new mansion, and says before 'e's done wiv Schmoodle 'e shall 'ave a gallery of ole masters as'll make the Noo York 'ighbrows stare. And I'm 'elpin' 'im to do it. I'm gettin' ready, by degrees, an assortment such as won't exist even in Noo York, and that's "goin' some," as they say over there.'

'What's the price o' that marvellous Gainsborough you showed me; the one wiv the wonder-

ful browns in it?' I asks, tryin' to get a bit of information.

'That?' 'E considered a second or two. 'That'll cost Rottenbaum, time it's ready, not a penny less than three 'undred.'

'Dollars?' I asks.

'Pounds!' 'e ses emphatic.

Drawin' a quick breath to 'ide my surprise, I asked 'im if that included everythink.

'Everythink,' 'e ses, as if it was a marvel o' cheapness. 'Everythink, even to puttin' it on a steamer in a case. Not insurance; that ain't my affair. Nor the Custom 'Ouse on the other side. 'E 'as to arrange 'ow much the duty is.'

'I don't blame yer,' I ses. 'I don't like Custom 'Ouse orficers, they're so—inquisitive.' 'E laughed.

'Nothin' to fear in this case,' 'e answers. 'Nothin' whatsoever. I send Rottenbaum a bill showin' what 'e owes me, and if there's any doubt, they can refer to me. My books are open to inspection. "Clean" business is my motto. You want ole masters? I make 'em. Price, so much per square foot accordin' to date. Every part guaranteed my own work, even to the worm-eaten stretchers. Rogers!' 'e called. 'Bring a sample of our sixteenth century mouldin'. Not that we made last week. The old stock!'

Rogers brought a bit o' gilt wood which 'e put into my 'and.

'There!' ses Noretti. 'Go into any Art Gallery in Europe and tell me if you can see any difference between what you'll find there, and that piece you're 'oldin'.'



'E might as well 'ave put into my 'and a stick cut last week in Eppin' Forest, and told me it was the rod Moses used in 'is water conjurin' trick. Fact is, I was kind o' dazed. I never knew till then, there could be any line o' business I couldn't get the 'ang of inside an hour or two; enough, anyway, to 'old my own, so to speak. And I told 'im so.

'Yes,' 'e said, 'the Art World's a very interestin' callin', and yer meet very interestin' people in it.' I know by my own experiences and also 'cause of my cousin who's got an antique shop in the West End.

'E was tellin' me what funny people there are among the real aristocracy. One old lord in particular 'e took a rise out of. This old gent, whose clothes must 'ave been made in the early part o' the reign of the late Queen Victoria, used to come into 'is place regular, every week, for years. Always askin' prices; never buyin'. You know 'ow patient the Yidden are in dealin'; never 'urrying', so as not to frighten the customer. But at last, my cousin's patience wore out, so 'e laid a little trap.

One afternoon, in come my lord, lookin' round as usual. Pricin' this, examin'in' that, and puttin' on 'is pinchney to 'ave a closer look at somethink or the other. At last, 'e come to a cup and saucer standin' on a pedestal all by itself.

'Hullo, Grosnoski, what 'ave we 'ere?' 'e asks, as 'e takes up the cup and puts it under 'is eyes. My cousin, who was just movin' a piece from its position a distance away, walked over to 'im.

'That, my lord, is a cup and saucer,' 'e ses.

'So I see, so I see!' ses the old gent, testy like.  
'But why is it placed by itself on a pedestal?'

'I attach a great deal o' value to that cup and saucer, my lord. I may be wrong—it's only my opinion'—(my cousin is well known as the best judge o' china in England),—'but I 'ave a belief as to where that cup and saucer come from, my lord,' answers my cousin wiv great conviction.

'Well, where does it come from?' asks my lord.

'That, my lord, is my secret,' my cousin ses, lookin' 'im straight in the eyes.

'What do you want for it?' asks the old chap.

'I'm askin' a 'undred guineas for it, my lord,' ses Grosnoski, as 'e wipes a little dust awf a bit o' marble.

'One 'undred guineas for this small piece! Absurd! You're not serious, surely,' the old boy ses.

'I'm perfectly serious, my lord, but I don't ask your lordship to buy it,' my cousin ses.

The old boy examined it again, tryin' to find some mark to 'elp 'im to place it. 'E wiped 'is watery eyes wiv a silk pocket-handkerchief to give 'im a better chance, but no maker's name could 'e find.

Grosnoski's air o' mystery puzzled 'im; a cup and saucer standin' alone on a pedestal must mean something, and 'e knew Grosnoski's reputation in the market. Wiv all this in 'is mind 'e turned to 'im, and, as usual, made a bid which 'e never thought would be considered.

'What would you say if I offered you forty guineas for it?' he asked.

'I should say, "Try me, my lord," ' ses the artful Grosnoski.

'Well then, I offer you forty guineas for it,' ses the aristocrat, smilin' at Grosnoski in a challengin' sort o' way.

Grosnoski snapped out smart as the crack of a whip: 'It's yours, my lord, and I thank you. It's the first deal we've 'ad, after many years' tryin', and I 'ope you'll be satisfied with your bargain.'

And when 'e told me the story, e' ses, 'And the dam thing cost me four-and-six at a shop in Oxford Street; that's 'ow I taught 'im not to come smellin' round my gallery, year after year, without buyin' anything.'

When I got into Wardour Street," continued Isaacs, "I thought I'd like to try my 'and at a little talk wiv the antique people, so I walked into a dirty-lookin' place where the proprietor was sittin' at the back o' the shop, pretendin' to read a newspaper. 'E 'ad black, curly 'air, a jowl like a prize pig, and a mouth—well, directly I saw it, I thought o' that Oorangatang at the Zoo; you know, that one what's in a cage all alone. One look was all I wanted to know I must feel my way careful.

'Good-mornin',' I commenced, puttin' on my best West End manners and talk. 'I'm just takin' a look round to see if there's anythink worth pickin' up to add to my collection.'

'What was you searchin' for in particular?' 'e asks rather short and sharp, I thought.

'Oh, anythink which took my eye,' I ses, glancin' round the place.

'Ow long 'ave you been collectin'?' 'e asks in a nasty raspin' voice.

'Not very long. Only since father died,' I answers, in a light and airy fashion.

'What name?' 'e raps out.

'Oh, 'e died abroad,' I ses, bein' took at a disadvantage by these sudden questions.

'Well, if 'e did, I suppose 'e 'ad a name?' 'e ses, as sour as an orange what ain't ripened on the voyage 'ome.

'If I told yer 'is name, I think you'd be surprised,' I said impressive.

'Maybe I should; then again, maybe I shouldn't. What 'ave you collected up to the present?' 'e ses, not seemin' a bit anxious to make a new customer.

'Various,' I ses, wavin' my cane in my 'and, and lightin' a fresh cigarette. 'Various. I ain't got awf the mark proper, yet. Now,' I ses to put 'im in a good temper, 'what would you recommend?'

'Anything 'ere's worth its money,' 'e ses, wavin' 'is crumpled newspaper over the place in a casual sort o' way. 'What about a nice bit o' "Ming"?''

'E pointed to a shelf where there was several bits o' china, but not knowin' which particular bit 'e meant, I thought I'd counter 'im and let 'im see 'e wasn't doin' wiv an idiot. So I answered in a superior sort o' way: 'I think I prefer "Ching."'

'Oh, yer do, do yer? "Ching" 's your fancy, is it? And no bad judge, either.'

I felt rather bucked, I tell yer, that my first shot should 'ave come awf.

'Well, if you like "Ching," there's the very bit for yer.' And 'e took a bit awf a shelf, 'andy, but keepin' 'is eye on me all the time. 'That bit's fourteen twenty,' 'e ses.

'Is that the age?' I asks, rememberin' Norette and 'is old masters.

'No, the price,' 'e ses, very curt.

'Rather too red for my fancy,' I ses, superior like. Then thinkin' it'd be better to shift my ground, I ses, 'What about a specimen o' "Ling"?'

"Ling-a-Ting" or "Ting-a-Ling"?' 'e asks, keepin' me well in 'is eye.

'I don't mind which,' I ses, careless and condescendin'.

Takin' a bit awf the same shelf—it seemed to me that everythink 'e wanted was close to 'is 'and —'e passes it to me: 'That's a rare piece o' "Ting-a-Ling," 'e ses. 'Seventeen 'underd.'

'Is that the price?' I asks, turnin' it round in my 'and as I examined it.

'No, the date,' 'e ses, snatchin' it from me and puttin' it back on the shelf.

'Rather too young for me,' I ses, watchin' to see what effect it 'ad on 'im.

'Oh, indeed,' 'e scoffed. ''Ave you any particular fancy? 'Ow'd yer like a choice piece o' "Ding-a-Ding"?' Now, that's a nice rare bit,' 'e ses, pointin' to somethink what looked like an egg-cup.

'Price?' I asks, gettin' used to 'is way o' talk.

'Make me an offer,' 'e ses. 'Anything in reason and I'll take it. I'm clearin' out o' "Ding-a-Ding." 'But after what Norette 'ad told me about the lord makin' offers, I wasn't fallin' into that trap, and told 'im so.

'Well, to save time,' 'e ses, 'I'll mention a few of the best things I've got in stock, and you can stop me if there's anything you'd like to see.

There's "Ling-a-Ting" and "Ting-a-Ling"—no, you said you don't like that. Too young, you said. "Bung-a-Fung" and "Wash-a-Bosh"; "Fong-a-Jong" and "Nanki Poo"; anything strike you yet? No! Then there's "Ying-Zang"—only one piece o' that; and one very choice piece o' "Ping-Pong," 'e ses, turnin' on me wiv a snarl like the tigers at the Zoo when the man brings the meat round. "Ping-Pong" 's about the only thing to suit you. "Ching" 's too red for yer, is it? The "Ting-a-Ling" 's too young for yer, is it? Why, you sweepin's of the East End, do you think for a second I didn't spot you at once for a inquisitive, 'ungry-eyed, lantern-jawed, slit-mouthed Pollak of the Whitechapel Road? You only started collectin' since yer father's dead, 'ave yer? Don't you believe it. You've been collectin' things you ain't paid for, ever since you was old enough to know a copper from a cart-wheel.'

I thought I was pretty good at slangin', and was just goin' to get in my little bit in return, like, when 'e went on:

'Do you suppose, almost before you opened that unwashed mouth o' yours, I couldn't tell that all you know about china was what you'd pinched awf the barrer of a blind man in Petticoat Lane? And don't you suppose that directly I saw yer come into the shop I ses to myself, "Watch this bottle-shouldered sheet o' paper, else 'e'll slide something awf a shelf into 'is pocket before you've got time to sneeze"? Now, get out, and get out quick, before I make up my mind to lift you up and squeeze yer through the drain in the gutter. And

that's the most suitable place for yer, wiv a face wiv "sneak thief" wrote all over it.' "

And, out of breath over the recital of his wrongs, Isaacs finished by asking indignantly: "And that's what I've come to see you about. Ain't that a libel? Can't I 'ave 'im up for slander?"

To which question I could only answer that, in his case, I should not advise proceedings.

## CHAPTER XII

### A DEAL IN "CABBAGE"

I WAS talking to Isaacs in Aldgate High Street, and noticing as Lowy passed, that they gave each other a mutually savage glare, I asked why, seeing, as I thought, they were, or had been, partners in various transactions.

"'E ain't a gentleman," he said in answer, rather shortly.

"Gentleman" is a word capable of many definitions, and as I thought Isaacs' idea of the meaning of the word would be instructive, I asked him to explain, although I knew the term, as far as he and a Christian were concerned, meant one who would not haggle, but give him the exact amount for any article he might be trying to sell.

"What is a gentleman?" I said.

"Well," he replied, "ain't there honour" (he aspirated the 'h') "among—er—gentlemen?"

"You've somewhat paraphrased the proverb," I remarked, but he ignored the observation, either from ignorance or artfulness, and continued:

"Lowy ain't a gentleman, because 'e don't keep 'is word with 'is pals; no class 'e ain't. I'll tell you."

I begged him, gently, to keep his hands still, as he was drawing the attention of the moving throng: he put them in his pockets where they remained a minute or two.

"If there's one thing that makes a business man wild, it is, to do trade with a fool or a schlamil



(unfortunate). I don't mind a gonof (cheat); if you know he is one, you take care to see that all the thieving—well—you watch 'im, that's all, see?"

"I see," I answered quietly, not to break the spell of his thoughts.

"When Lowy come to this country first, we was good friends. He couldn't talk the language, so I 'elped 'im a lot. First, and very important, I taught 'im the value o' English money. We used to go out together o' nights, and I'd take a pound off 'im for expenses, and commence by buying cigars. In the shop, I'd hold up a shillin' and ask for two sixpenny ones. Then I gave 'im one and kept the other, sayin' 'sixpence each: understand?' Same at the music hall; same at the bar; same on the 'bus 'ome. I kept the change as sort o' payment for the lessons I gave 'im. 'Ard-earned money, believe me," he said, trying to look as if he believed what he said.

"Profitable, though," I volunteered. A remark which elicited no response.

"'Course 'e wanted clothes," he continued. "The things 'e came 'ere in would 'ave disgraced a Chinaman. So I took 'im to a firm and rigged 'im out in proper style. I told the tailor 'e was a relation o' mine, and so as 'e would get the latest fashion, I said 'e was to put on a pound a suit extra, me gettin' 'alf of it as commission. You want to watch 'em in Aldgate, else they'll sell yer old stock; I couldn't let a poor foreigner be done down, could I?" he asked, almost with tears in his voice.

"Not by any one else, I should say," I replied, not expecting any comment.

"When 'e was able to run alone, so to speak, I asked 'im if 'e'd like to go into pardners with me, and 'e seemed pleased. So we 'itched up in double 'arness."

"What was the capital of the firm?" I asked.

"Lowy put in a 'undred and fifty," he replied.

"And you?"

"Me!" he said indignantly. "I give my experience, and cheap at the price." Which rebuke silenced me.

"Who held the cash—the bank?" I asked.

"Banks!" he said acrimoniously. "What's the good of banks? They take your money, but where are yer if they break, eh? Not much. I held the money, 'cause I was the acting pardner till 'e got accustomed to English ways of trading."

"Keep any books?" I asked.

"My 'ead's my book," he answered. "Books are dangerous things. I never liked books since a judge said books can be made to prove anything. My tuppenny's good enough for that," he said, tapping his head, and spitting out the fag-end of a cigarette which was sticking to his lips.

"You must have a remarkable memory, then," I said.

"I can recollect what's due to me, you bet," he answered, and continued: "We commenced to deal in different things like old iron, horse-shoes, iron-hooping—anything old, and, of course, profits was divided. Later on 'e did a bit o' buying: 'e was very good at old clothes and jewellery. Smelt out bargains same as a cat can a stale 'addock.

Then there came a day when we 'ad our first

quarrel. 'E said I took more share of the profits than 'im, and complained, sayin' I 'ad 'ad three parts of the profits to 'is two.

'Ven you divide the profits you make,' 'e says, 'you don't divide fair.'

'Ow's that?' I ses.

'Vell,' 'e goes on, 'suppose dere's fife pound rivach (profit): you takes der money in one 'and, and say, "One for me, and one for you, and one for me: one for me and one for you."'

'Well,' I says, 'you can't 'ave it all ways: if I'm the first, you must be the last.' Ain't that fair?" he asked me plaintively.

"Are you asking me? Because, if so, I should say your friend was right. You *did* get three shares to his two."

"No, I ain't askin' you at all," he said contemptuously. "You ain't a business man."

"What did you say to him in reply?" I asked.

"I told 'im 'e don't understand that the senior pardner always gets a little more, and buys 'im a drink to square things. So we makes good friends again."

"But how are you the senior partner?" I asked. "You put your experience against his money: you should divide equally. I don't think you're entitled to anything more."

"Oh, don't you?" he remarked sarcastically. "I'm English, he's foreign—you can tell that, the funny way 'e talks—and if an Englishman ain't superior to a foreigner, I want to know what is."

He touched me on a weak spot, but still I wasn't convinced, and said so.

"Well, if an Englishman's superior, it's another

name for 'senior,' " he said, and that clinched the argument as far as he was concerned.

He took up the thread of his story again, saying, "Then we starts to deal again, and sometimes we gains, and sometimes we loses."

"Much?" I asked.

"I can't afford to lose my reputation, you know," he replied with mock earnestness.

"Oh, you only lost your reputation, then," I said. "Not money."

"When we lost, it was my reputation and his money. I put my reputation, which is gained by experience, into the business, and 'e gets my experience against 'is money. Ain't that clear? Don't every one 'ave to pay for experience?" he asked rather heatedly.

"Certainly," I answered quickly, for I could see I was touching him on the raw of his honour. Mollified, he continued:

"Then I thought of the wholesale way of making money. 'Cabbage' buying."

"Where did you buy them from—Covent Garden or Spitalfields?"

"Oh, not that sort of 'cabbage,' " he replied in a voice of—almost—pity. "Nothin' so common. Me, with my brains in the rabbit-food business! Not much. Jews ain't farmers—they're merchants. Farmin's too risky. When the old know-alls who spend their lives lookin' through telescopes are able to make the rain keep off, or make the sun shine when the crops want it, I'll think about it. Till then, me for the goods ready for trade, whether it's seed-pearls, ripened-rubies, or good strong cloth that's grown into garments."

“What sort of ‘cabbage’ did you go in for, then?” I asked, all at sea.

“Tailors in the East End, principally Yidden, make up clothing for large City firms, who send them rolls of cloth which the tailor cuts and makes up for ‘em. So many yards are allowed for each garment, and if the tailor can save a few inches on each, that’s called ‘cabbage,’ see? Often he saves as much as three or four yards out of a roll, and that’s ‘is own property. Well——”

“I understand,” I said, to give him time to get breath.

Smiling at the recollection of some particularly good deal, he continued: “Lowy and me used to buy this ‘cabbage,’ and a bit more too, when we got to know the ‘giver-out’ at the City firm. It come about like this. I was talking to Friedberger, the tailor in Brick Street, who ‘ad no one to fetch the goods from the City, ‘cause ‘is porter was away ill. ‘I’ll manage it for you,’ I ses; ‘I know a man who wants a job: leave it to me.’

Friedberger was delighted, and I ‘ops off to see Lowy, who tumbled to my plan at once, and come with me to Friedberger’s. ‘‘Ere’s a man who wants a job,’ I says. Friedberger explains to ‘im that ‘e ‘as to go to the City warehouse with a cart, and bring back a lot o’ rolls o’ cloth. They ‘aggles, naturally, about the pay, and after they ‘ad shouted at each other a bit, and things was settled, Lowy started off.

Some boys called after ‘im, askin’ if he was the Lord Mayor’s new coachman, and ‘ow much ‘e’d take for ‘is whiskers. Lowy, being foreign, thought they was admirin’ ‘im an’ laughed all over ‘is face,

but when one of the boys said, 'Garn, it ain't a man at all—it's a monkey out o' the Zoo,' 'e shook 'is whip at 'em.

Lowy did 'is work so well, the regular carman was sacked. He got on fine, too, with the 'giver-out,' which was the important thing for us, and in no time we 'ad a good business.

I used to meet 'im before 'e got back to Friedberger's, and take the 'extras' off in a barrow.

'Better than buying old clothes,' I said to 'im one night, after leavin' the merchant who bought the 'extras.'

'I prefers der cloth to der clothing trade,' 'e answers, winkin' at me an' laughin' as we shared out the profits.

Things went as smooth as the oil fish is cooked in, until one night Lowy didn't turn up at the usual place with the 'extras.' I waited and waited, and began to think 'e was up to some game—not playin' fair. So I wheeled the barrow into the yard of a pub near by, gave the yardman tuppence to mind it for me, and rushed round to Friedberger's, to see if he'd come back.

'No, 'e 'asn't arrived,' Friedberger said.

'P'raps 'e's 'ad an accident,' I said.

A few minutes after, I could see by the look on Friedberger's face 'e was gettin' very uncomfortable.

So was I.

'You'd better go and see what's the matter,' I said, and without waiting to put on a collar, 'e shoved on 'is 'at and coat and rushed off to the City.

When 'e come back 'e gave me the most 'orrible

news. Lowy 'ad been taken to the station, 'orse, cart and all.

'What ever for?' I asked, lookin' surprised, but feelin' very funny in the stomach.

'Vat for!' Friedberger replied, very sarcastic. 'You ought to know vat for—you and 'im's always togedder. Vat for!' 'e says, mimicking me. 'Vat for! You're very surprised, I'm sure. You're as surprised as Bernstein was when 'e was told 'is place was afire. Vat for, indeed!' 'e ses again, glarin' at me as if I was a thief. Keeping my temper, I asked 'im where they'd took 'im to.

'To Cloak Lane Police Station, Mr. "Vat for," and I expect somebody else'll be there before long,' 'e says.

'What,' I says, 'are you in some schlenter business with 'im?'

'Me!' 'e says, turnin' on me fierce as a tiger. 'Me! 'ow dare you! It's you I mean—you——'

'Oh, indeed,' I ses, cool like. 'Was it my 'orse and cart? Did I fetch the goods away? 'Cause I get you a man to 'elp you out of your trouble—am I to be accused of stealin'? You'll 'ave to pay for this—yes, pay for it, 'eavy,' I ses, standin' up for my dignity. And I left 'im, disgusted with the ungratefulness of 'uman nature.'

"What 'appened to Lowy?" I asked.

"Lowy got six months, and I went into another line of trade. What's more, when 'e come out, I told 'im our pardner business was finished. I 'ad my reputation to think of, you see," he answered with the blissful assurance of complete innocence.

"Naturally," I said. "One's hands—for goodness' sake, keep yours still, Isaacs!—must be spotless, if credit is to be maintained."

Then he went on with admirable charitableness:

"I didn't bear no malice, mind you; in fact, I gave 'im some good advice."

"Which, I hope, he took to heart, coming from one who had so befriended him," I said.

"Never mind about that," he said somewhat testily. "I told 'im, very impressive like, 'Onesty's the best policy.' I can't do no more trade with you, but you must try to lead a better life. No man gets to a good position by 'anky-panky business,' I said very serious: and ain't it true?" he said, turning to me with a smile.

"Quite true," I replied. "So that was the end of your connection with Lowy?" I added.

"Not quite," he answered. "You know I always 'ad a soft 'eart: even when I was selling matches on the kerb in Cheapside, I was known as 'simple and soft.' "

"A heart of a tender young maiden," I almost whispered. Taking no notice of the compliment, he continued:

"One day I met 'im in the Mile End Road, and 'e stops me, sayin', 'David,' 'e says, 'you ain't served me right: I got into der gaol t'rough you, but I'm willin' to let der pyecorns be der pyecorns'—you know 'ow funny these Pollaks talk—'I vant a pardner in a goot scheme, and you're der man for it.' "

"What is it?" I asks, feelin' very suspicious, 'e talked so silky.

'Just dis,' he goes on. 'I'm goin' into der book-makin' an'——'

'You mean the bookbindin',' I says. 'Any money——'



'No, no,' he interrupts. 'Not der bookbindin'—der bookmakin'; you know—der races of der 'orses—der betting.'

'Oh,' I says, tumblin' at once. 'I see. Well, what d'you want me for?'

'Ve makes der ready money book,' 'e says. 'Ve lay der odds.'

I never 'ad any experience in the line, being too busy in my own, so I asked 'im, 'Odds! What is "odds"?''

'Odds!' 'e says, excited.' ("Keep your hands quiet, Isaacs, please!" I begged.) "'Der odds is fifty to vun ve vin and fifty to vun dey lose!'

I liked the sound of that and got 'im to tell me more about it. When he had explained the business to me, I saw, at once, there was money in it all right, providin' I could work it my way, so I let by-gones be by-gones as he wished.'

"Softness of heart, again?" I said.

"You've got it," he replied. "I thought it out, and in a day or two I saw him and agreed to go pards again. I bought two suits of white linen frock-coats, waistcoats, and trousers. When we dressed up in 'em the first time, with the white top hats, we both laughed. I couldn't 'ave been more of a tokkuf (swell) if I'd been getting married. On the money bag I had printed, 'Albert Edwards, The Golden King.' On the sign behind us was wrote. 'Bet with him and get your money.' That was a joke, see? The Goyim (Gentiles) thought it meant they'd get their money: what it really meant was, 'be sure you *try* to get your money.'

Down we went to the races—I won't tell you

where—and set up our sign. The Jewish punters didn't catch on to us at all, but the Christians simply rushed us. I called out, 'I lay the "Field," I lay the "Field"!' Two to one, bar one. Three to one "Green as Grass": four to one "Whisky 'ot": five to one "Leicester Square": twenty to one the "Field"! Here you are, gents, bet with Albert Edwards, the Golden King.'

Lowy put down the bets in a large book, but what he wrote there I don't know to this day. I took the money and gave out the tickets; I felt safer with the cash; his book-keeping I should think'd be amusin' to see, him a foreigner too, and the rate we was taking money."

"Did you make a profit?" I asked.

"First race, forty-eight pounds, clear, after payin' everybody. Second race, we didn't do so well; things went against us; we lost thirty-three pounds. Third race I thought it time to go a buster, so I bets more than ever. I laid everything there was running, and I was so keen to make a good 'aul I'd 'ave even laid against the bloomin' tide rising."

"How did it pan out?" I asked.

"It panned out not so bad for me, but poor old Lowy was most unfortunate."

"Poor Lowy," I said, not at all surprised, however.

"I'd laid very 'eavy against a 'orse called 'Fishwife,' and when the race started I sent Lowy to see how things were going. He come back white as a plaice skinned for the pot. "Fishwife" 's vinning on t'ree legs,' 'e said. Then, I thought it was time to act. 'Stay 'ere,' I said, 'while I

goes to see for myself. Don't leave, mind,' I ses very firm. I got off the box, put the bag under my frock-coat, and strolled, not too slow, towards the entrance. When I got behind the crowd I walked faster and faster, and outside the gate, I jumped into a taxi and told the shover to drive to London, quick, as I was taken so ill, it was doubtful if I'd get there alive."

"And did you?" I asked.

"I just managed it," he answered. "Next day, I was so upset about poor old Lowy, I went to Brighton, feelin' I wanted a change of air."

"And Lowy, what happened to him?"

"I didn't see him for a week. You never saw such a sight. His face was—well, I didn't think it was a face,—it looked more like a squashed carrot what's been served wiv blue ink sauce. Plaster here, blue and purple bruises there, bumps on his 'ead as big as a puddin', three teeth out—I asked 'im if they fell out from fright, or what.

'No,' he told me, 'they was knocked out in der fights!'

'Fights!' I said, very surprised. 'What d'you mean by fights?'

'Oh, my goodness!' 'e ses, all of a tremble at the thought of it. 'David, they nearly killed me. After der race, der "Fishwife" backers come running up for deir money. "Vere's Albert Edwards?" dey shouted. I says, you'll be back in a minute, and ven you don't come, 'dey begun to pull me about, and knock me down and jump on me, till I commence to make my prayers. Den I get up, and dey punch my eyes, my face,—never 'ave I been so beaten. Dey tear der coat off my

back, dey stomp on my new v'ite 'at until I began to run. And, oh! how I run! Never 'ave I run so fast. Not a shilling 'ad I in my pocket, so I 'ave to walk 'ome. Every yard of der way 'ome, more deader dan alive. Never mind, ven I got to bed after bathin' my face and 'ead, I t'ought, Dave 'as got away vit der gelt, and we make der good profit. 'Ow much did we clear, David?' 'e asks. And without waiting for an answer he goes on in a complainin' voice. 'And vere 'ave you been all der week—I been 'ere every day but don't find you.'

When I told 'im I 'ad bad news for 'im, 'is face, at least that part what wasn't purple, went a sort of mud colour. 'E couldn't speak, so I gave 'im the sad story of 'ow, w'en I got out of the gate, two strong men laid 'old of me and tore the bag off me and bolted.

'Dat vas a lie! A lie!' 'e screamed, jumpin' to 'is feet and shakin' 'is two fists in my face. 'You're a t'ief! A robber! I 'ave you in der P'lice Court'—you'd 'ave laughed to see the old fool ravin' and stompin' up and down the room.

I looked at 'im straight in the face, calm, like a judge—no excitement—and I says, quiet but severe, 'You call me a thief,—you, a convict—I am a respectable merchant. Lowy, I'm ashamed to think I've ever 'ad any dealings with you at all. Go!' I ses, pointin' to the door, like they do on the stage, 'and if you speak to me again, I'll 'ave you up for slander, see?' And 'e went out, shakin' 'is fists at me and tremblin' all over with rage, while 'e was mutterin' and cursin' in 'is own lingo.

And I've never spoke to 'im since. It don't do to be mixed up with criminals, in my opinion: schlenter business ain't no good: and, besides, you never know w'en you'll get nipped. No, the golden rule is, "'Onesty's the best policy.' "

"Every rule has its exceptions," I said, as I wished him good-night.

## CHAPTER XIII

### RUTH STRELINSKI'S RAFFLE

**I** MET Isaacs walking pensively towards the theatre district, and was surprised to see him in such a mood. The cunning of the fox, the alertness of the terrier, had temporarily disappeared from his face.

"Did you ever meet anybody in your life willin' to give somethin' for nothin'?" he asked. "Somethin' worth 'avin', I mean; not, say, a cigar which is offered because the giver don't smoke 'em——"

"Yes, plenty," I said.

"Introduce me to 'em then," he said, "and I'll make their fortune for 'em; and mine too."

"How?"

"By exhibitin' them. They'll be rarer than the far-famed sea-serpent, which roams the mighty ocean, and ain't never yet been caught."

"There are people who give large sums to charities. You see the lists in the papers nearly every day," I said, thinking the remark conclusive.

"Yes, I know you do," he made rejoinder, "but that ain't somethin' for nothin'. They're paid by the advertisement they get, and that's why they give. I know, see?"

And I'll tell you why I know. I got up a raffle once for a Yiddisher girl, an artist, down on 'er luck. Didn't 'ave no more idea 'ow to push 'erself than I 'ave of—of—behavin' dirty to a pal, say.

And as to sellin', she 'ad as much notion of sellin' as I 'ave of paintin'.

Rube Bernstein told me about 'er case and took me to see 'er.

'Mind, Dave,' 'e says, 'this ain't your usual line; this is a real charity affair; no rivach (profit) in it, and,' 'e says as we got near where she lived, 'behave proper and respectful when you meet 'er, and call 'er "Miss."'

When we got in the room—a bed-sittin' room—there was two chairs in it, a table, a bed in the corner, a washstand, an easel, a strip o' carpet and precious little else, and when she stood up, I saw a rather short young woman of about twenty with a body about as thick as two bits o' cardboard stuck together, lookin' as if she 'adn't tasted anything but tea and bread and butter for weeks.

But 'er eyes! They were like two tremendous, great, shinin' black balls with a light in 'em I've never seen before. There wasn't any colour in 'er skin, and when she looked at me it was like—like the pictures I've seen in your churches. Straight! I felt as if I was soilin' 'er by even breathin' in the same room. Never 'ad such a feelin' before. Rube needn't 'ave warned me 'ow to behave: there *was* only one way.

All round the room was pictures without frames: on the wall, on the floor, against the bed in the corner; I never saw so many pictures outside an auction, only these looked the goods. Rube told 'er what we'd come for, and I shall never forget 'er voice as she thanked me; I can't say why, but she made me think of my mother as she must 'ave spoke as I was in 'er arms of a night when she was

1

putting me to bed in——” Isaacs broke off and looked at me sheepishly. He continued hurriedly:

‘Miss,’ I said, ‘we’ve come about the raffle. You must know,’ I ses, seein’ a bit o’ cash was wanted bad, ‘raffin’s my special trade; born in it. Sold some tickets already; ten of ’em at four bob a time, and there’s the money.’ And I took out from the inside pocket of my vest two pounds which I laid on the table. Rube looked at me very odd; thought I’d gone balmy, I believe.

‘But I didn’t know you ’ad got on so far,’ she said, surprised. ‘It’s truly wonderful,’ she went on. ‘And are the tickets already printed?’ she asked.

‘Printed! Rather. And what’s more, they’re the prettiest tickets you ever saw. So pretty, miss, that everybody who buys one, if ’e don’t win your picture, ’as got one worth framing already.’

‘Oh, do please show me one,’ she said, smilin’, and showin’ a set of teeth any dentist would give something for to put in ’is showcase. But though she smiled, I could see she was almost too weak to do it, and it soon died away like a—like a sick baby’s.

‘No, miss, you’ll excuse me. I don’t want to make you jealous of Rube and me as artists.’ She thought I meant it, and said:

‘Oh, are you artists, too?’

‘Artists, miss, but in a different line to you. Never mind that. What I come for was to look at the picture, but first of all, before we examine it, would it be askin’ too much if we ’ad a little bite of somethin’? I’m feelin’ a bit peckish.’

She nearly broke down as she answered, ‘I’m so



sorry, but to say truth, I've nothing I can offer you, except a little bread and butter.'

Then I knew my first idea was right: she was very near starvin'.

'I'm glad! I'm real glad,' I says. 'I'm dyin' for a bit of fried fish; ain't eat any for months through bein' away. Would you mind if I go out and bring it 'ere to eat, miss? I've never met an artist before. I know it's a liberty I'm takin'.'

'Oh, I'd like you to, ever so much, if you wish it. Only I must tell you I 'aven't much cutlery, and you'll 'ave to make shift,' she ses quite 'omely-like.

I didn't wait any longer, but took Rube with me to buy some grub. He was very annoyed when we got outside, and said I'd taken a great liberty in invitin' myself like that.

'Rube, my son,' I says, calm as the sea at South-end, but very impressive, 'Rube, one of the reasons of my success in business as a merchant is, I am a reader of character. If you 'adn't been as blind as a British workman on Saturday night, you'd 'ave noticed things. You didn't, so come along to the shop, and let's see if you know anything about fish fried in oil.'

We weren't very long in buyin' fish and taters, bread, butter, cheese and—what d'you think?—a bottle of what they call 'bone,' a red-coloured wine, for 'er, and a couple of bottles of beer for the common people, meanin' Rube and me.

When we'd done, we looked like two mothers out shoppin', and by the time we got back there was a nice table-cloth laid, with plates, and knives and forks.

## RUTH STRELINSKI'S RAFFLE 171

I've seen 'ungry people eat—been 'ungry myself many a time—but that poor little girl! I thought she'd never stop, straight, I did. And yet 'er manner of eatin' was so—well, so different to me and Rube—you'd 'ave thought she was bred and born in a palace. When the meal was over she bucked up a lot, and laughed, as if we was at a theatre, when Rube and me washed up in a basin she gave us, and put the things back in the cupboard.

As we got up to go, she said to me, 'Isn't it funny? we've eaten together and I don't know your name: please tell me.'

'I'm not very keen on it as a name, but it's David Isaacs,' I said, wonderin' what she was gettin' at.

'Why,' she says, 'David is a very aristocratic name. He was a king in Israel when the Jews 'ad a country of their own.'

'Don't you worry,' I said, proud like. 'There's Jew kings in every country, only they don't wear crowns: they reign private; it pays better, and the limelight ain't so strong. And I'll tell you more, I'm goin to be in the reignin' business myself, one of these days, if I'm spared.'

'Make me Chancellor of the Exchequer, Dave,' says Rube, not understandin' what I meant. 'I only want the job a year—one little year.'

'Done with you,' I says, seein' the little girl was amused. 'And what can I do for you, miss? Command your 'umble King David! Would you like to be, say, lady-in-waitin' to her Majesty Queen——, 'well, whoever it is, 'cause for the mo-

ment, my royal nibs 'asn't even got as far as a donah in my royal optic.'

'I'm very grateful to your Majesty,' she replied, fallin' into the joke. 'I think I'd like to be the 'ead of a department for the 'elpin' of strugglin' young artists.'

'But there ain't money in that,' I said, 'I want to give you a profitable job, miss.'

'Oh, I don't want money, except to live on. I want to 'elp those who can only 'elp themselves in paint and stone,' she says. 'Only enough to 'elp them to put their ideas into colour or marble, that's all.'

This sort of talk was gettin' a bit above me and Rube, so we said 'good-night' after she 'ad told us we might come back and report progress in the lottery business.

And that night, when I went to bed, all I could see in the dark was a pale face and two great wonderful eyes. I lay awake, lookin' at 'em for hours, and somehow, all the time, my mother would keep comin' into my mind, making me wonder what she would think of me if she could see the way I——"

His remark trailed off to nothing, and I allowed it to do so.

"Next mornin', me and Rube Bernstein went to the printers to get the tickets printed, and when 'e asked for the 'copy' (which means the writing on 'em) we was both stumped.

'You do it for us,' I says. 'It's for a lottery. Young lady sellin' a picture—a real beauty. You may 'ave a ticket yourself, if you like, for four

## RUTH STRELINSKI'S RAFFLE 173

shillings as a great favour, 'cause they're all sold in advance.'

I've got one of 'em in my pocket."

And he brought out a dirty pink ticket on which was printed:

GRAND LOTTERY OF A REAL OIL PAINTING  
A High Art Work of Art by a celebrated young lady  
artist will be drawn for by the landlord of  
The Cheese and Earwig Hotel, on Monday, the 5th  
September.

Only 150 tickets to be sold.

TICKETS, 4s. EACH.

"I don't recall 'The Cheese and Earwig Hotel,' " I said to Isaacs, meditating on the somewhat odd name.

"I should say not," he replied. "It's only an ordinary 'pub' where you meet your pals to 'ave a drink and a game o' bagatelle. We called it a 'hotel' to please the landlord so as 'e'd sell tickets. The landlord is an Irishman, though most of the customers are Yiddish, so, knowin' a Gentile can always get money out of a Jew for charity—only I will say, Jews are pretty good at charities—as you know, you 'avin' a lot to do with 'em—I puts it up to 'im like this: 'O'Brien,' I says, 'I'm goin' to do you a good turn.'

'You've *given* me manny a wan, me bye,' 'e replies, funny like, 'is little grey eyes twinklin' under 'is 'eavy eyebrows.

'This time,' I answers, 'it's money in your pockets.'

'Whose money?' 'e asks. 'Not yours, I'll bet.'

'O'Brien,' I says, solemn, 'you'd make a very good turn at a music-hall so long as you only walk on and say nothin'. But if you start talkin' they'll leave their seats thinkin' you're goin' to recite "Higher Water," or "Who's Got the Most Feathers in His 'At.'"'

I asked 'im what was 'is fancy in the way of light refreshment, and 'im choosin' gin (I didn't let on I saw 'im drawin' it from the water tap), we got together on the business in 'and. I recommended 'im to get in a extra supply of drink for the night of the draw, as the place would be packed with people who'd be dry before 'and with excitement, and dryer after the draw with disappointment.

'E gave it a good send off by 'avin' a large bill wrote and put up in the bar, drawin' attention to it by tellin' everybody 'e 'ad bought ten tickets for it 'imself. If 'e won it 'e meant, 'e said, to 'ave it drawn for again among them who 'ad subscribed. Noble of 'im, I thought, till I remembered 'ow much 'e'd make on the drinks.

'Boys,' 'e said, 'listen to me now. This wonderful young lady 'as graciously allowed this picture to come into this part of London at a proice out of all raison. As a rule, only American millionaires could afford to buy 'em, wid a sprinklin' of public galleries, when they was extra flush.'

'E spoke so well, I began to think 'e was a Yid in disguise, and told 'im so.

'Go along, Dave,' 'e says. 'Don't you know we're the most eloquent people in the world? Ain't

you 'eard the sayin' that an Irish girl will charm a bird from a bush?'

'Yes, but you're no beauty in petticoats,' I says, passin' my glass to 'im to fill again.

'No, but I'm the son of one,' 'e says, 'and the bird I loike best is the money bird, and if you can charm that bird from the Yidden, begob, you're qualifyin' fast to 'elp yourself to the money of an East India Road Chinaman, and that's sayin' something. By-the-by, did I ever tell you the story of 'ow I once beat a Chinky at F'an-Tan?'

'You did,' I says, not wantin' to 'ear it particular, 'and very funny I thought it.'

'It wasn't funny at all,' 'e says, annoyed. 'It nearly cost me me loife.'

'Well, ain't it funny that a yeller Chinese should think 'e could beat an Irishman?' And seein' 'e was alright again, I went off sayin' "Don't forget the tickets, O'Brien."'

Next day, Rube suggested we should get the Rabbi of our district to give us his card to swell merchants in the city. So I 'ad a lot more tickets printed at five shillings a time increasin' the price a bit. Rube was afraid we was doin' wrong, 'cause we 'ad said only a 'undred and fifty tickets were to be sold.

'That's all right,' I said to 'im. 'The tickets we sell in the city are numbered seven 'undred up, so their chance will be nixey, see?' Ever seen a Rabbi?" he asked me, and without waiting for my reply, went on:

"This one's a funny little chap—no business man, of course, else 'e wouldn't be a Rabbi. Dresses in a long black coat with a straight collar,

and a black, broad-brimmed 'at, like a protestant minister. Looks like one, too, at a distance. 'E wanted 'er address to go and see 'er. 'No,' I says, 'you'll excuse me, Rabbi' (we calls 'em 'Hosen' among ourselves), 'this is Rube's and my little stunt: we're doin' this on our own; we ain't invitin' competition for the reward we 'ope to get.'

'What reward?' the Hosen asks, sharp like, thinkin' we was out for a cash profit.

'Er thanks,' I says.

'E listened to us both and, when we 'ad finished tellin' 'im our plans, 'e gave us 'is card to a lot o' Jews in the city.

We cut the city in two, Rube takin' one part and me the other, and the first place I got into, when I sent my card I saw the boss open the door and peep out cautious; the boy came back sayin' he was too busy to see me. So I sent 'im back with a ticket which the boss bought. That was all I wanted; I didn't want to see 'im any more than 'e did me."

"Well, there you are, Isaacs," I said. "He gave you something for nothing."

"Don't you believe it," Isaacs replied. "He gave five shillin's rather than see me. Besides, 'e kept the ticket.

Next place the boss saw me, and eyed me very suspicious as I was shown in to the private office which was nicely furnished in green leather, and smellin' very strong of cigar smoke.

'I'm very busy,' 'e says, 'very busy indeed. What's your business? Be brief, please, as I'm expectin' an important customer from the country.'

After I'd told 'im what I'd come about, 'e says

## RUTH STRELINSKI'S RAFFLE 177

indignant, 'Do you suppose I pay five hundred a year rent to see people like you?'

'No, I don't suppose you do,' I says, 'but I expect you keep your offices open to make money, and 'ere's your chance. 'Ere's a young lady artist, one of your own people starvin', while you're a-wallowin' in wealth. If she was a man, do you think I'd be wastin' my valuable time for 'er? No! She's an artist, with more in 'er 'ead—only she don't know 'ow to sell it—than your stock's worth, and that's sayin' somethin'.' Isaacs looked at me and smiled sardonically as he said, 'That was a little bit o' kid, see?' Then he went on:

'Seein' 'e swallowed it, I ses, 'And that's why a respectable merchant like me is offerin' you for five bob a ticket which may win you a picture you'll be proud to offer to the Natural Gallery,' I ses. 'Five bob is all I ask,' and noticin' 'is 'and goin' to 'is pocket, I adds, 'and as much more as you can spare for a real artist.'

'E saw the point, and laughs as 'e gave me ten bob, for which I passed 'im a ticket.

'Two tickets if you please,' 'e remarks, 'oldin' out 'is 'and for the other.

'Certainly, if you wishes, but I looked on it as five bob for the picture and five bob for charity, knowin' you're a sport,' I says, takin' my 'at from the seat to go.

As I was sayin' 'good-day,' 'e says, 'If you want a place as a commercial traveller at any time, you may call again.'

'I keeps my own travellers,' I replies, dignified, 'but thank you all the same.'

'What line?' he asks.



‘Various,’ I says, on my guard.

‘Very,’ ’e says drylike. ‘From second-’and boots to pearl necklaces, I expect. I know; I was once a “various” merchant, myself,’ ’e adds, eyein’ me very artful, and risin’ from ’is chair, as a ’int for me to clear out.

And as I looked round ’is place as I left, I began to think. I ses to myself: ‘If ’im, why not me, eh?’ ”

“I see no reason at all, Isaacs, with different methods,” I said. “But any way, there was a case of something for nothing, wasn’t it?”

“Not much. ’E paid ten bob for the flattery I gave ’im about bein’ a rich merchant, and givin’ the picture to the Natural Gallery.

The next I called was a very ’aughty kind o’ chap; very ’aughty, indeed; trying to make me believe, by ’is manner, ’e’d been born in Hyde Park Lane, West End. Sat in ’is chair smokin’ a cigar of the well-known ’Avana brand made in Curtain Road, off Whitechapel. Put up in imitation cedar wood boxes: large red and gold labels round each one with ‘Flor de Stinkalouda’ printed on. ’Is talk gave ’im away—I spotted ‘Commercial Road’ in every word.

‘What can I do for you, me man?’ ’e asks, condescendin’, and lookin’ at me as if I was a worm what ’ad bored its way through the Turkey carpet thinkin’ it was gettin’ to grass.

‘I’m callin’ on all the largest and best-known merchants in the city on behalf of a young lady, who, like yourself, was born in the best circles, but who, owin’ to the sudden death of ’er father, is reduced to poverty. She is an artist by profes-

## RUTH STRELINSKI'S RAFFLE 179

sion, and Rabbi Hertzheim said 'e knew you at the Spanish Place Synagogue as a sephardim—'igh class, that means—and that you would be glad to aid in the good cause, so when the list is advertised——'

'E didn't wait for any more, but fell in right up to 'is neck. 'Ow much do you suggest for my subscription?'

'Sir Claude Tungenberg 'as donated ten pound; Sir Patrick Icklestein ten pound; Sir 'Enry Boguskovski——'

'Put me down for fifteen guineas,' 'e says, and wrote the cheque there and then.

'That puts you at the 'ead o the list,' I told 'im, which was what 'e wanted, of course.

'Send me a paper when the list is printed; I'm so busy, I 'ardly 'ave a moment to do more than glance at the commercial column of the *Times*,' 'e says, talkin' very toney. 'When you see Sir Claude again,' 'e went on, more lofty than ever, 'give 'im my compliments and tell 'im I didn't see 'im at the King's garden party last week; a very jolly affair. Good-day.'

I could afford to kid 'im that I was took in wiv 'is talk about garden parties, seein' I 'ad 'is cheque for fifteen guineas in my pocket.

Comin' out, I made up my mind to try the real nobs, so went to the offices of a millionaire, thinkin' if I could get fifteen guineas out of a make-believe, a real big man should be good for fifty at least.

I was kept waitin' 'alf an hour before a young chap wiv an eyeglass in 'is eye and dressed very swell came out and asked my business.

When 'e 'eard it 'e says, 'I'm afraid Sir Archi-

bald'—they do pick out funny names, don't they? Archibald, you know! Leave out the 'Archi' and the 'bald' 'd fit fine. They can't 'ave any sense of 'umour else they'd never take such names—'Archibald!' mind you! and 'e slept under the same tailor's bench as my uncle, and was called 'Ikey.' 'I'm afraid Sir Archibald couldn't possibly receive you as 'e is busily engaged with one of 'is Majesty's Ministers. P'raps you'd better write.'

'I got no time to write,' I says, irritable. 'All I want is twenty-five pounds for a charity——'

'Whose patronage is it under?' 'e asks.

'I dunno what you mean,' I says. And I didn't.

'Well,' 'e explains, 'as any of the Royal Family anything to do with it?'

'Ere, are you pullin' my leg?' I asks, my blood gettin' up. 'This is a charity for a young Jewish artist in the East End——'

'East End!' and 'is voice sounded as if 'e was sufferin' 'orrible pain. 'Sir Archibald can't possibly entertain anything to do with the East End, unless Royalty or Lord Rothschild——'

'Ah! now you're talkin',' I ses, tumblin' quick to what was necessary. 'If I told you the names of all the Lords and Ladies who are interestin' themselves, includin' the Dook of——'

'Why didn't you say so before, and save my time?' 'e says, lookin' very upset. 'Come this way, please.' And 'e showed me into a room while 'e went in to talk to the great Sir Archibald.

After keepin' me waitin' nearly 'alf an 'our, 'e came back with a cheque for two paltry pounds. 'With Sir Archibald's best wishes for your success,' 'e says, or words to that effect. 'And 'e 'as

## RUTH STRELINSKI'S RAFFLE 181

kindly given permission for 'is name to be printed as a patron.'

'I'm afraid 'e wouldn't like to see 'is name down as a patron,' I told 'im, 'as we're puttin' the amounts subscribed by patrons against their names, and the smallest sum I 'ave is from Sir Claude Tungenberg for ten pound. But if 'e wishes it particular, I'll stretch a point in 'is favour and put 'is name with two pound alongside it.'

This time instead o' looking pained, 'e looked worried.

'Kindly give me the cheque back,' 'e says, tryin' to grab it out o' my 'and, 'and I'll go and ask 'im.'

'I'll 'old the cheque till you come back,' I says. 'Don't keep me long 'cause I got to be at the Dook o' Montyrose's at twelve o'clock to report what I've done.'

Back 'e comes in five minutes with a new cheque for twenty, sayin', 'Sir Archibald 'ad no idea it was such a swell affair. 'E wishes you to explain to the Dook 'ow glad 'e is to add 'is 'umble mite to any charity the Dook is interested in. Don't forget that, please.'

'When I see the Dook I'll be sure to mention it,' I says, smilin'.

And 'e shook 'ands wiv me as if I'd been the Dook's first cousin by marriage.

To cut it short, I played the aristocrat wheeze so well, that at the end of the day, I'd collected close on to a 'undred pounds. Rube, when I told 'im, was almost mad; he'd only done a little over three pounds.

'Why didn't you tell me the stunt?' 'e said, in a 'urt tone o' voice.

'I only learnt it by experience,' I said. 'Study 'uman nature, me boy. Every man's a musical instrument, but you must know the art o' playin' 'im,' I lectures, lookin' at 'im very 'aughty. 'And we're all open to flattery, whether we're men or women,' I ses like as if I was a city merchant myself.

'What a salesman you'd make, Dave!' he says, admirin'.

' 'Ere, chuck it! I ain't a piano for you to practise on,' I jerks out, not likin' 'is trying to kid me.

On the night, I made a little speech when the lucky number was drawn. I 'ad to do this, 'cause owin' to bad management on the part of the landlord, more tickets 'ad been put in the box than arranged for. Some demanded their money back, sayin' it was another trick of Isaacs 'to make a bit 'imself.' Very unjust, I thought it, 'cause it wasn't true—this time.

When they'd talked themselves 'oarse and dry, I called out, 'Give your orders, gents, at my expense!'

After they'd all 'ad a drink, I mounted a chair.

'Gents,' I ses, 'your kind attention, please, to a few remarks. First of all, this ain't a matter of business, it's a charity. Charity! And what is charity? Is it givin' away somethin' you don't want? Nò. Real charity is givin' somethin' you do want to some one who wants it more. Can you picture what every one of your subscriptions means to a young lady artist who can't go out and push for 'erself? All the money you've given will go

to 'er without the deduction of a shillin', and when I tell you I 'ave sold a single ticket for as much as twenty pounds, and,' I says, drawin' some cheques from my pocket, 'there it is, signed by Mr. Hertzberger; and two others for ten pounds,' liftin' 'em up to show there wasn't any 'anky-panky. 'The grand total comes,' I says, makin' an impressive pause, 'to the splendid sum of one 'undred and seventy-six pounds ten shillin's.'

"Do you know," Isaacs continued, "I almost made myself cry, I talked so strange for me, and though I say it, they gave me a 'earty cheer at the finish, 'specially when I insisted they should appoint some one to come with me and Rube to see the money 'anded over to the lady.

They chose the landlord, and next night, when we called for 'im 'e was dressed up in a large check suit, with a cat-skin vest, and rings on 'is fingers as if 'e was goin' to a publicans' picnic. I made 'im take the rings off, though. I wasn't goin' to 'ave those things flashed in the eyes of my young painter. Not likely!

We was shown up into 'er room, and I noticed she looked ever so much better in 'ealth: more colour in 'er face, and 'er eyes wasn't 'alf so dark underneath.

'Good evenin', miss,' I said. 'The raffle is finished; we've come for the picture, and brought the money, which this gentleman is 'ere to see 'anded over on behalf of the subscribers.'

'Please take which one you'd like,' she says, wavin' 'er 'and in front of 'em all and never even askin' 'ow much the money come to. 'Won't you sit down?'

The publican took one of the two chairs, and Rube and me stood while I laid the list showin' the amount on the table.

She went very pale when she saw what it come to, and turnin' to me, she asks, 'Is it a joke you're playin'?'

Quick as a flash, I replied, 'Joke! No, miss, this ain't no joke, for there's the money in cheques and notes and silver,' I ses, layin' it all out for 'er to see.

Then she went white as a lily, and I was just in time to save 'er from fallin'. Rube got some water from the wash-stand, and bathed 'er face and eyes,—oh! them eyes! I shall never forget 'em!—and soon, when she opened 'em, she gave us a little smile as she said, 'I'm afraid I'm very foolish, but the money—it is so enormous—I——'

'No, it ain't, miss,' I said, but blowed if I could go on—a rare thing for me—for somethin' bunged up my throat, and swaller as I would, I couldn't get rid of it till I'd 'ad a good drink o' water.

Then the landlord butts in with a grand idea.

'Miss,' 'e says, 'would you do us the pleasure, and the honour, of takin' a little meal with us in the West End, now, at my expense? Just to celebrate a very 'appy occasion in my loife. Will ye now?'

'Do, please, miss,' Rube chips in, and after a moment's 'esitation, she agreed, askin' us to wait for 'er in the street, while she tittivated 'erself a bit.

What a 'appy evenin' it was! And what lovely ideas she 'ad as she talked to us about Art. I didn't understand 'alf what she said, but I do

## RUTH STRELINSKI'S RAFFLE 185

know it was like music to 'ear 'er voice. What was it I 'eard once at the play, 'er voice was gentle and low: a jolly good thing in a gal,' or somethin' like that. Whoever wrote it knew somethin' about it, in my opinion.

O'Brien did us fine, and when we landed at 'er door in a taxi she said to 'im, 'Good-night, Mr. O'Brien, you 'ave given me a very 'appy evenin'.'

Turnin' to me and Rube, she ses, 'Good-night, Mr. Reuben and Mr. David; I really think'—and 'er eyes got very shiny and wet lookin'—'you—'ave—saved—my—life.' And she felt for 'er 'ankerchief and give way proper, for I noticed when the door was opened she 'ad to 'old on to the wall for support."

Isaacs sat there, tense, with his hands tightly clenched, and on his brow there were beads of perspiration.

There was a slight pause before I said, "Anyway, Isaacs, whatever reason the others gave for, *you* may say you gave something for nothing."

"That's Gawd's truth," he replied. "I give 'er every bit of my 'eart without any 'ope of reward. I don't mind confessin' to you it was the first time I can remember doin' such a thing."

"It won't be the last, though, I'll wager. Your heart is in the right place," I said encouragingly.

"Chuck it!" he said, suddenly and almost angrily. "My lendin' day's Saturday, and on that day my place o' business is closed—or ought to be. Good-day."

And he walked out quickly.



## CHAPTER XIV

### A SECRET SERVICE ADVENTURE

**M**Y office boy regards himself as a person of importance; as one who stands between me and desirable and undesirable visitors; the former being clients (all of whom he knows, as the number is limited), and the latter—all others. In his opinion, it is his duty to protect me from those who do not come to seek my counsel. In any case, he is aware that no one is to be shown into my private room without being previously announced.

Therefore, when he came in to inform me that Mr. Isaacs wanted to see me on urgent private affairs, he resented being pushed aside and nearly knocked over by that gentleman. The affront was apparent by the indignant look he gave Isaacs, who, entirely unaware of any slight, rushed towards me with his hat at the back of his head, and said breathlessly: "Don't stop me. I'm in awful 'urry. In the Secret Service now. Want yer——"

"What are you talking about?" I demanded, as I pointed to a chair, and told him I didn't do my business in that slip-shod kind of way, and that he must not bounce into my room in the free and easy manner he had just adopted.

He accepted the reproof without any kind of apology, using the time whilst I was speaking to regain his breath. When I had finished, he said: "You know a bit about most things. Can yer

tell me 'ow many warships the Government 'as got?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," I replied. "Nor do I wish to know. Further, why do you want the information?" I asked, amusement and curiosity mingled in the question.

He looked at me with his eyes half closed, and speaking between his teeth, almost whispered: "In the Secret Service now——"

I laughed; I could not help it. To think of Isaacs in such a capacity was distinctly amusing. My mirth had no effect on him, however; he sat there, silent, as if feeling the weight of responsible office, with the consequent necessity of using great caution in his speech.

"Whose Secret Service?" I asked, not, of course, taking him seriously. As he did not reply, I said: "Is it the British?"

"Take yer dyin' oath yer won't split, and I'll tell yer," he said in a tone a revolutionary president might adopt to a novitiate.

"I don't give pledges of that sort, Isaacs," I replied. "It is possible that I might feel the necessity, as a loyal Englishman, of denouncing you as a traitor."

He jumped to his feet full of indignation at the thought.

"Me a traitor!" he exclaimed. "Not likely. As you'll see later on. I'm on the job to dish the blinkin' Kaiser, and make a bit at the same time. That's fair, ain't it?"

"Certainly," I replied. "Only, go warily, and don't fall between two stools," I added, as a word of caution.

"Trust yer little David," he said. Then he came back to his original question. "Can yer tell me 'ow many ships there are in the British Navy? That's all I want to know."

"No, I can't, and I doubt if any one else could at the present time. Before the war, it was public property, of course, as it was published in *Brassey's Naval Annual*——"

"Where can I find that?" he asked eagerly. "That'll do me fine."

"But there's nothing secret about that," I said, to prevent him wasting his time. "There's sure to be a copy in the British Museum."

He was on his feet again in a moment, making for the door.

"Knew I'd get what I wanted from you," he said, as he went out speedily.

A few weeks after, he visited me again; this time, in no hurry.

"How's the Secret Service job progressing?" I asked jocularly.

"Left," he replied laconically.

"Sacked?" I asked.

"Resigned," he replied. "The pay stopped, so I stopped wiv it. I don't trust my life to a bloomin' German spy wivout pay. Not likely. It was 'ard luck, though, 'cause when Issy 'Arris and me met 'im——"

"Met whom?" I interrupted.

"The chief German spy," he answered.

"Where did you meet him?" I asked, amused at what I still conceived to be his nonsense.

"At Grignolatti's Restaurant in Gerrard Street. I was playin' Issy the best out o' seven games o' matador for two bob a time, and the old boy sat

at the next table and watched us. 'E got into conversation by tellin' Issy 'ow 'e ought to 'ave won the game by puttin' 'is double blank at the other end, and closed it up. That's 'ow it begun. Then I played a game wiv 'im, and 'e wiped the floor wiv me; seemed to know every stone I 'ad in my 'and.

When Issy went awf to the Calladium Music Hall, the stranger and me got chattin' together, friendly like. All at once 'e asked me what business I was in. Not bein' too agreeable to talk about my affairs, I thought I'd throw 'im awf the scent, so I ses: 'Me? Oh, I'm in the shippin'.'

I thought 'e'd jump over the table, 'e was so surprised.

'My Gawd!' 'e ses, 'then you're the very man I want. What luck!' 'e mutters to 'imself. 'What marvellous luck!'

'Who for?' I asks. 'You or me?'

'Both of us,' 'e ses, tremblin' wiv excitement, and screwin' 'is napkin in 'is 'and till it looked like a dirty snowball. Then 'e sidled up close to me and whispers: 'Would yer be willin' to earn money—good money?'

'Rather, so long as it's 'onest,' I replies, me bein', as you know, very partic'lar.

'Come to my hotel to-morrow mornin', twelve sharp,' 'e ses, still whisperin'. 'We can then go into the matter fully.'

'E give me the address of a swell hotel in the West End,' Isaacs said, as he searched his pockets and found a visiting card which bore the inscription:

"PRINCE LORIS TSCHLOGTCHZ  
Suite 169 — Hotel."

"A' foreigner, evidently, by the name," I remarked.

"Rather," Isaacs replied. "Wiv 'is 'air cut so that it stood up like a brush. But 'e talked English all right: if 'e 'adn't told me 'e was a German of Check (Czech) descent, I should never 'ave took 'im for one.

Next mornin' I was there all dressed up, on the tick o' the clock, wonderin' what was goin' to 'appen. I was shown up to a lovely sittin'-room where the prince was waitin' for me. 'E was in 'is shirt sleeves, layin' on a sofa and smokin' a big cigar when I got in. 'E shook me by the 'and very cordial, and went into 'is bedroom to put on a dressin'-gown.

After a preliminary canter, such as askin' 'ow I'd slept, and what a lovely mornin' it was, and-cetera, 'e got serious all of a sudden. 'Now to business,' 'e ses.

'What business?' I asks.

'Before I tell yer,' 'e ses, 'are yer willin' to swear a sacred oath?'

'Swear *to* anythink, and swear *at* anythink, if the business pays well enough,' I answers.

'Good,' 'e ses, 'you're the sort for my money. Now, stand up, and fold yer arms across yer chest. Thus,' 'e ses, crossin' 'is 'ands to show me what 'e wanted. Then 'e goes on: 'Repeat after me the followin'; I swear——'

'I swear,' I ses.

'By Saint Erminius of Tosgdersnitch, never to betray the interests or secrets of my Imperial Master, but rather will I suffer infamy or death,' 'e ses, solemn like, as if it was a prayer.

When I'd finished, 'e made me 'old up my two 'ands, like the Germans do when they say 'Kamerad,' and then 'e laid 'is against 'em for a second or two. Then 'e ses, 'Comrade, you are now one of us. It is only fair to tell yer that if yer break your oath, you will be taken to the Fatherland, and made to suffer tortures what won't bear thinkin' about.'

'Go on!' I ses, to let 'im see I wasn't to be kidded as easy as all that. 'Yer can't get passports, nowadays; I know, and so do a lot o' my people who 'ave found it out to their cost, tryin' to get to Ireland wivout 'em.'

'Tush!' 'e ses, like a spittin' cat. 'At Cromer my yacht is free to come and go as it pleases; it sails under the Swedish flag. I merely mention it in yer own interests, though I'm sure it ain't necessary, unless I err greatly in my judgment.'

'What's the pay?' I asks, feelin' it was gettin' near time to touch somethink, specially after takin' that oath about that chap wiv a name like a bad cold.

'If you succeed,' 'e ses, 'it's riches for life; if yer fail, it's nixey—nothink.'

'Good Lord! 'Ave you brought me all the way 'ere to tell me I got to work for nothink?' I asks, gettin' ready to give 'im a bit o' chin. Prince or no prince, I thought to myself, 'e'll 'ear a few 'ome truths from me if 'e don't toe the mark proper. But 'e only smiled; wasn't a bit upset, just lookin' at 'is finger-nails to see they was nicely manicured.

'My friend,' 'e ses, 'that's 'ow all spies are paid.'

'Ere! Who're you a-callin' names?' I asks,

not likin' that word at all. 'Me, a spy! Why, they run terrible risks if they're caught,' I ses, seein' myself shot at sunrise by a lot o' soldiers.

'A noble profession,' 'e ses, quite calm. 'As you say, the risks are great, and therefore, it takes a brave man——'

'Look,' I ses, chippin' in. 'If there's any danger in your job, I'm not takin' it on; yer may as well know it first as last. I'm brave enough to face the dangers o' this city, but spyin' ain't one of 'em, see?'

'E swep 'is 'ands across me, and in a manner o' speakin', wiped me awf the earth.

'My dear young friend,' 'e ses, smooth like, 'you've took the oath, which is bindin', so don't let us talk any more about that. What I want to know is, 'ow much money will yer want for your expenses to Portsmouth?' 'E stopped as if considerin', then 'e proceeds: 'There's the rail fare—you'll travel first class, o' course—and stop at the best hotel there. P'raps you'll need a few pounds to bribe wiv—or, make presents, as we call it.'

'E finishes as if that was all what was required, but as the word 'expenses' 'ad put an edge on my appetite, I commenced to think a bit for myself.

'That's right,' I ses, 'but you've forgot two new suits o' clothes, and a overcoat; a rug for the journey, and—say—three pair o' boots.'

'Quite so, quite so,' 'e ses, wavin' 'is 'and again as if I was a mere speck o' dust on 'is patent leather boot, while I was tryin' to think of a few more necessaries.

'Then there's——' I was goin' on to say, when 'e stopped me.

'If I give yer thirty pounds for expenses, that ought to last a week, which is about the time it'll take to get the information I want. Yes,' 'e ses, after thinkin' a moment, 'a week ought to do it nicely, and when you've brought back the complete list of the ships of the British Navy, I'll put yer on to another job.'

'Wiv more expenses?' I asks, to let 'im know I'm a man who wants comfort if I'm to do my work satisfactory.

'Certainly, certainly,' 'e answers, cheerful like. 'My Government pays well for good work.' 'E went to a table, unlocked a drawer, and took out some bank-notes.

'And when do I touch pay for the work?' I asks, wantin' matters to be all ship-shape to start wiv.

'E walked up and down the room as if thinkin' very deep, and rubbin' 'is 'and over 'is 'air every now and then. Then 'e stopped in front o' me.

'I should say in three months at the outside,' 'e replies.

'And 'ow much is it?' I asks, quick, while the subject was 'ot, so to speak.

'E took a cigar case from 'is pocket, and openin' it 'eld it to me to 'elp myself. I took two as 'e 'appened to be thinkin'. After I'd lighted up, 'e ses slow and deliberate: 'It may be fifteen, or if the job's satisfactory, it may be twenty.'

'Twenty what?' I asks, gettin' pins and needles in my feet wiv anxiousness.

'Thousands,' 'e answers, as if 'e was talkin' o' matches.

'Twenty thousand!' I ses to myself. 'Twenty



thousand lovely sovereigns all in the bank at interest! Why, I need never do another day's work as long as I live! After the war, I'll buy a motor-car, and go to the races in it. I saw myself gettin' out of it at the the-ay-ter just as the curtain went up, and 'eard myself sayin' to the shover, 'Come back sharp eleven, Beckett, and put a 'ot water bottle inside for me, as my stall's sure to be draughty.' I saw myself takin' my pals for a ride in the country, and comin' back covered wiv branches o' May blossom. I saw—— Then to show 'im I wasn't knocked flat by the figure 'e'd mentioned, I pulls myself together and ses: 'Twenty thousand pound ain't much, yer know, for the task I got before me——'

'You mistake,' 'e ses. 'It's twenty thousand marks, I mean, not pounds.

'And what the 'ell are marks?' I asks, suspicious, 'avin' 'eard about them Spanish and Portuguese coins where a million of 'em makes about six and six, or seven bob, at the outside.

'A mark is a shillin', therefore, twenty thousand is equal to a thousand pounds. Not bad pay, wiv expenses, for three months' work, I think. But, I'll try and get my Imperial Master—the Loftiest One—to stretch a point and make it five and twenty.'

'Twenty-five ain't a lot, yer know, for a man who wants as much as I do,' I ses, to let 'im know I was somethink superior, and seein' at the same time my dreams of a car wiv my own shover slumpin' to a ride in a taxi.

'Well, well,' 'e ses, gettin' a bit impatient, 'that's the best I can do. And now, 'ere's the

cash for the first week's expenses.' 'E counted into my 'and six five-pound notes which I examined very close to see they wasn't schlenter ones.

Now, you must be awf,' 'e ses. 'Time presses. Report to me 'ere in a week, and keep me advised 'ow things progress. Above all, don't fail to bring the information in detail; every ship, every torpedo boat; 'ow many guns they carry; 'ow many make a crew. And—try and get into touch wiv somebody at the dockyard who'll be willin', for a price, to put time-bombs aboard.' 'E looked at me serious, and added: 'remember your oath!'

I said I'd remember everythink, even to telegraphin' for more cash, if it was wanted, but 'e didn't take any notice o' this, for in a voice broken wiv emotion, 'e ses: 'Gawd bring yer safe back to your chief. But—if you're caught by our enemies—~~me~~, rather than betray, because you'll die if yer do.'

'Oh,' I ses, satirical, 'I die if I betray, and I die if I don't; is that it?'

'That's it, as true as you're standin' there,' 'e ses, solemn.

'Well, all I can say is, it seems to me I've got a blinkin' fine chance, whichever way the game goes,' I ses, makin' up my mind I'd look after number one all the same.

'The chance of a lifetime,' 'e ses, gently shovin' me towards the door."

Isaacs looked at me to see what effect his story had made on me.

"And then?" I asked.

"Then I went straight awf to Scotland Yard and gave 'em all particulars. I told 'em at the same

time, I'd like to make a bit out of 'im, if there was no 'arm in so doin', and they ses, 'Certainly. Play 'im up for all 'e's worth. Come and see us, occasional, and let us know 'ow the game goes: we'll do the rest.'

'And I shan't get into any trouble?' I asks, wantin' to know I stood all right.

'Of course not. You've done the right thing in comin' 'ere. Now, go ahead.'

So I went to the British Museum, got Brassey's book out of the library, and spent two days copyin' the names of the ships out. Never thought there was so many ships in the world, but I got it done at last, though, and gave a gal I know ten bob to type it out all correct. Then I went to Portsmouth, and spent some o' the exes 'avin' a good time. Met a lady——"

Not being interested in that part of his story, I interrupted him by asking: "How did the business part of the venture turn out?"

"I wired the prince every day to keep 'im sweet. The first said:

'Progress favourable. Terrible dangers. Isaacs.'

'E send me one back which said:

'Earty congrats. Continue the noble work. Tjddolytch.'

At first I thought the last word was some secret sign which 'e'd forgot to tell me, but they told me at the post orfice it was the name o' the sender.

Then I'd pop a wire awf to put 'im on tender-looks:

'Ave been nearly killed. Send more cash. Isaacs.'

Then I got one givin' me a bit of a shake-up, too:

'Return at once with what you went for, or take the consequences. Trodglodytsh.'

That's what the post office people got 'is name to this time.

When I entered the hotel on the Monday afternoon, he was sittin' in state ready to receive me. 'E was in full evenin' togs, wiv a broad red and white ribbon round 'is neck, and a figure 'angin' from it of a fat, nearly naked man, 'oldin' a pot o' beer 'igh up in the air. 'E saw me lookin' at it, and told me it was the 'ighest order of the German Empire—the noble order of the 'Stein o' Lager.'

I made 'im a low bow which 'e accepted dignified, and I ses: 'I 'ave come back after 'orrible difficulties, prince, as wired.'

'Ave you got what yer went for?' 'e asks, not risin' from 'is seat to welcome me, and talkin' in a crisp sort o' way, altogether different and less friendly.

'I 'ave,' I ses, as proud as if I'd drove the Turks out o' Constantinople.

'Is manner changed immediate; 'e jumped up from the chair and put 'is 'ands on my shoulders as if I was a new-found relation.

'My dear young colleague,' 'e ses, 'oppin' about as if 'e was goin' to do a song and dance turn, 'my friend, you make me mad wiv delight. I thought you 'ad failed; I'll be quite frank wiv yer. I was thinkin' out 'ow to get yer to Cromer aboard my yacht, and take yer to Germany, there to pay the penalty o' failure. Your news is splendid, and I'm sure the All-'Ighest will be graciously

pleased to be pleased. I can see 'im wipin' the tears out of 'is eyes and the beer out of 'is moustache wiv joy, as 'e ses to one of 'is suite, "Ah, the lieber Tschlogtchz—strafe the name! I never can pronounce it! Tell 'im to change it to Von der Balustrade—it's easier to say. And send 'im the order of the Iron Toothpick set in garnets, Von Schlossteiner,—they're cheap and showy at the price." That's what my august master will say. And, it's all through you,' 'e ses, lookin' at me as if I'd sunk the bloomin' ships instead o' gettin' a list of 'em. 'What *can* I do for yer?' 'e asks.

'Well, if yer want to know,' I ses, 'you can stand me a bottle o' champagne *and* a cigar, 'cause what I've been through on your account, I never shall be able to tell yer—never,' I answers emphatic, as if my nerves 'ad nearly gone bung.

'E rung the bell and ordered a bottle o' 'Eidsick, sayin' to the waiter, 'Owe six,' as if 'e'd 'ad five already.

'Give me the documents,' 'e ses when the waiter 'ad gone out of the room, and after 'e'd cast 'is eyes over 'em, 'e looked at me as if I'd saved 'im from bein' trompled to mortal death by a savage 'orse: 'Wonderful! Wonderful! Every detail's 'ere; size and date o' buildin', guns, armour platin', number o' crews. A triumph, I call it! Isaac,' 'e asks, 'what d'yer think o' me as a picker o' men? Didn't I spot yer the minute I saw yer playin' dominoes? Eh? 'Ere,' 'e ses, goin' to a drawer, pullin' out a fiver, and shovin' it into my 'and, 'take this as a bong booch,' whatever that is. Then lookin' at the papers as if they was love

letters, 'e ses, 'These must go to the All-'Ighest at once. And 'e started to do 'em up, careful, wiv seals and all that, and addresses 'em to somebody at Amsterdam.

As I was leavin' 'e calls out, 'Come next Wednesday at twelve for further orders.'

I clicked my 'eels together, saluted 'im, and ses, 'Right-o, prince,' and left 'im as 'appy as a gal who's got a one line speakin' part in a Revue.

Then I went to Scotland Yard and told 'em what I'd done. They was very tickled over it, and when I asked 'em not to nab 'im till I'd got my thousand, they laughed and promised faithful they wouldn't.

Durin' the week, I wondered if the next job'd be as easy as the first one, thinkin' it only wanted two or three and the thousand'd be as good as in my pocket. So I went to the hotel on the Wednesday, very eager, as you may suppose. When I got there, I was 'orrified to 'ear that the prince 'ad took 'is departure. They told me a gentleman 'ad called for 'im on urgent business, and 'e'd 'ad 'is trunks packed in a 'urry, and in 'alf an hour was out o' the place. Fancy that! 'E'd 'ad the cheek to go awf wivout leavin' any message for me! 'Is second in command, so to speak. Not to mention my losin' such a customer!

'Ain't there any letter for me?' I asks the chap in the desk. 'Ave a good look, if yer don't mind,' I ses, thinkin' 'e might 'ave left five or ten quid on account of further expenses. But as there was nothink, I came to the conclusion I'd been treated dirty—very dirty, after all the risks I'd run for 'im.

So back I went to the Yard, and when I told 'em

'e'd bolted, they didn't seem a bit surprised. Said they expected it.

'Then you know where 'e's gone?' I asked.

'We've got a pretty good idea,' they ses, rather reserved.

'Where is 'e then?' I asks, meanin' to follow 'im up.

'We've got our blood'ounds on 'is track,' they ses. 'Come back in two or three days, and we shall be able to give yer more information.'

I thought it a funny way o' doin' things, I must say. 'Ere was me tellin' 'em about 'is escape, and they took it quite as a matter of course. Wasn't disturbed at all.

Two days after, I got a telegram.

'Come at once. Important. Prince Tschlogtchz. 'Ollenby Grange, near Yellingham, Norfolk.'

Feelin' it was my duty, I told 'em at Scotland Yard.

'That's right,' they said. 'That's 'is 'ome.'

Never even said 'thank yer' after me givin' 'em important information, and never askin' a bob, feelin' it was my duty.

Two hours afterwards, I was in a first-class smoker wiv my feet on the cushions, the illustrated papers on the seat, and doin' myself fine wiv a toppin' cigar, just like I'd seen the swells enjoyin' themselves goin' awf to Scotland for the salmon fishin'.

When I got to Yellingham, a footman come up to me and touchin' 'is 'at, asked if I was for the Grange.

'I'm for 'Ollenby Grange, my man,' I ses wiv chilly politeness.

'E opens the door of a pair 'orse brawm, and as 'e was shuttin' it, I ses, 'Tell the coachman to 'urry please, as I'm in a 'urry, and 'ave no time to spare.' Between you and me, I only said it to make 'im touch 'is 'at again, rather likin' it.

'I could see the 'ouse was a perfect mansion as we drove up a long carriage drive, and the 'all was so large a 'bus could turn in it easy. I was shown into a room as big as the Trocadero, which was furnished grand wiv velvet easy chairs by the dozen, and a carpet—well, I've never seen such a whacker. The room was full o' men—real toffs, you could see, by the clothes they 'ad on.

As I walked in wiv a servant I saw the prince talkin' to another swell, and when 'e caught my eye, 'e come rushin' up to me, most friendly. I reckoned I was in for a nice little 'oliday wiv the rest of 'is friends.

'My dear Isaacs,' 'e ses, 'ow prompt you are; I didn't expect yer till to-morrow. Never mind. Come this way.' And I followed 'im to a quiet corner of the room.

'I've 'eard from the All-'Ighest,' 'e ses in a whisper, 'and 'e's very angry that you included in the list some of the ships the Germans 'ave sunk; ten of 'em at least. I 'ope you 'ave some explanation to offer, else I fear I shall be reduced to a plain commander in the order of the Stein o' Lager,' 'e ses, in a voice what told me 'e was very upset.

While 'e was talkin' I was thinkin'.

'Tell our master, I know what I'm doin', I ses. 'Say that Isaacs says that all the ships 'e talks of 'ave been rebuilt, and I'm the only one who knows it; p'raps that'll bring me an order. If so,



say I prefer diamonds, garnets not suitin' my complexion. Besides the cash, say, which I want bad.'

'E was relieved at once; my words acted like magic.

'Then the new ships 'ave been named after the old ones, is that it?' he asks. I nodded, lookin' wise. 'That's excellent,' 'e goes on, 'appy once more. 'I thought my judgment of yer wasn't misplaced. I'll send over a special messenger first opportunity. Not for a month or two, as I 'ave to stop 'ere on other business,' 'e ses, rather subdued, I thought. Then 'e goes on: 'Meantime, be ready when I come to town to 'old yerself at my disposal.'

'When'll that be?' I asks.

'Not more than two or three months,' 'e replies.

'Ow am I goin' on all that time for expenses; payin' my assistants in the spy business, and-ceterer?' I asks, not likin' the look o' things at all.

'All will be settled in three months. . . .'

'But what am I to do about comin' down 'ere at your urgent call?' I asks, wonderin' what 'e'd spring to.

'All will be settled in three months,' 'e ses again. 'When funds arrive; not before,' 'e ses, gettin' up as if there was nothink more to say. But I didn't move, waitin' for offers which didn't come.

'You must excuse me now,' 'e ses. 'We're goin' to afternoon tea. Don't forget. Three months. Good-day,' 'e ses, and I'm jiggered if 'e didn't leave me sittin' there and went awf wivout another word.

'Ere!' I calls after 'im. 'Prince! What about

my exes from London? First-class!' I bawls pretty loud, feelin' 'ot all over wiv indignation.

'E took no notice; I might 'ave been callin' a taxi what 'ad a fare, and I was just goin' after 'im when a servant who was standin' at the door come up to me and ses 'aughty like: 'You mustn't make that noise 'ere. We don't allow the prince to be agitated in any way; 'is 'ealth won't stand it.' And 'e led me from the room.

When we got outside I told 'im my tale, and I thought 'e'd never stop laughin'.

'Why can't 'e pay my expenses?' I asks 'im. 'If 'e can afford to keep up this mansion and entertain all these people there are 'ere, 'e ought——' I stopped, 'cause 'e started laughin' again.

'Lord bless yer innocent 'eart,' 'e ses. 'This ain't 'is 'ouse, and they ain't 'is guests; they're all inmates——'

'Inmates!' I shouted.

'Sh-h-h-h!' 'e whispers. 'Not so much noise. Yes, inmates. Didn't you know that this is a private asylum for gentry wiv money?'

'Good Gawd! 'Ave I been doin' wiv a mad-man, then?'

'In a sense, yes,' 'e answers. 'E's all right on everythink but the war. 'E *will* think 'e's a prince in the pay o' Germany, instead o' bein' what 'e really is—an English aristocrat. And 'e's dotty on the Kaiser; Gawd knows why—I dōn't. So dotty, that every three months, for the sake of 'is 'ealth, they let 'im escape tó London, where 'e always stays at the same hotel for a week or two.

After 'e's done a bit o' spyin' 'e comes back all the better in 'ealth.'

'E laughed again, as if it was a fine joke.

When I told 'em at Scotland Yard, they said they knew it all the time, and thought I was sufferin' from the same complaint as the prince.

'And quite as 'armless,' the inspector ses, as 'e taps 'is 'ead wiv 'is fingers. Never mind. I did my best for my country, didn't I?' Isaacs asked me.

"But you're Russian, not English," I said with a smile.

"Oh, am I?" he replied, with much feeling. "You give me a chance o' catchin' one o' them blinkin' Bosches and I'll show yer what country I belong to."

And when he had left the room, I was glad to have heard him express such a sentiment.

## CHAPTER XV

### A GAME OF BLUFF

COMING from the police court, where I had been on business, I saw Isaacs in violent altercation with his brother—an unhealthily fat young man. Their faces were very close together, and the swift movements of their hands were a danger to passers-by; indeed, one pre-occupied pedestrian came near to getting a blow in the face, escaping only by inches. When he informed Isaacs, in forcible language, that that gentleman was, by right, a scarecrow of the first order, the sarcasm passed entirely unnoticed, Isaacs being too busy castigating his brother with a scorpion's tongue.

As I approached, he drew his brother's attention to me, and said, "'Ere's my solicitor; ask 'im if yer don't believe me."

As I declined to do business in the street, they made an appointment for the following day, and I left them to continue their wrangle.

Isaacs, however, came alone, explaining that it was better, as his brother seemed lacking in business knowledge.

"Sully's the biggest fool I've ever met," he said, "and if 'e wasn't my brother, I'd pluck 'im so close, 'e wouldn't even want singein' for the cookin' pot."

"Is 'Sully' short for 'Solomon'?" I asked.

"Yes, it is, only it's not so short for the name

as 'e is from Solomon in sense, 'cause the first Solomon knew things. Now, if my old man 'ad called me 'Solomon' and called Sully 'David,' there'd 'ave been some sense in it, 'cause I've got all the brains of the family," he said, looking at me as if daring me to contradict him.

"And the nick-names would have been more appropriate, don't you think?" I suggested.

Isaacs permitted the remark to pass without comment, merely smiling to indicate that the point had not escaped him.

"It's like this," he continued. "Sully wanted to be on 'is own instead of workin' for somebody else. Thought 'e only wanted a little capital to make Rothschild's look like an East End pawnshop in a week or two. Where 'e gets 'is conceit from I can't say. Look at me, now! There's no limit to what I can do, and if the means of carryin' out a delicate piece o' business is wanted, apply to yours truly. Yet I ain't conceited, though I know I've got the gift of organisin' people——"

"For their or your benefit?" I asked.

"The general of an army always keeps in the background; I follow the military—it suits.

When Sully told me a man o' the name o' Wolfenstein wanted 'im to go into a dentistry business, I got 'im to tell me about it, 'cause I'd never 'eard o' the man, and I thought I knew everybody worth knowin' in the district."

"What sort of person would you consider *not* worth knowing?" I asked, to find out on what level in the society of the neighbourhood he placed himself.

"I don't want to know them as knows more

than me," he answered, with much determination. Then looking at me sagely, he went on: "I'll give yer a tip. When you're interdooosed to a man who shakes yer 'and as if you was 'is long lost brother—watch 'im, 'cause 'e's goin' to relieve yer of somethink, see?" Having waited a little for his advice to soak in, he continued:

"Sully said that Wolfenstein 'adn't been long in England, and was on the look-out for a young chap wiv a bit o' splosh to join 'im in the dentistry line. It took Sully's fancy, as it was a chance to start on 'is own, 'specially as the profits was divided 'alf and 'alf, and the capital was only two 'underd pounds.

'It ain't very much to start wiv,' I ses, 'but I suppose Wolfenstein puts in more as it may be wanted.'

'E didn't put it in; I did,' Sully said.

I thought 'e was jokin', 'cause it was only a week or two before I'd lent 'im a bit to go on wiv.

'You!' I ses, lettin' 'im see I wasn't in no mood for larkin'. 'And where did you find two 'underd pounds? 'Ave yer found a secret way into the Bank of England? Or, 'ave yer married a rich American heiress, recent?' I asks, sarcastic.

'E looked at me wiv them little twinklin' eyes of 'is, and ses, laughin': 'Not yet, but yer never can tell wiv a good-lookin' chap like me, what'll 'appen.' Then talkin' serious, 'e ses: 'Father lent me the money—that's where I got it from, if yer must know.'

I come over quite faint, 'e give me such a shock.

'What do yer mean by takin' my money wivout askin' me first?' I shouted at 'im. 'It's daylight

robbery, that's what it is. Why, you might as well take my watch out o' my pocket,' I ses, boilin' wiv rage.

'Your money,' 'e ses, as if I was tellin' 'im lies. 'You're talkin' foolish; it's father's, I tell yer.'

As I've told yer before, Sully don't seem to 'ave an idea o' what's right and what's wrong. I quieted down and asked 'im: 'Well, ain't it as good as mine? When 'e dies, don't I get it?'

'Only 'alf,' 'e ses, lookin' at me cheeky like. 'The other 'alf's mine.'

I wouldn't 'ave given my brother credit for such sauce, if I 'adn't 'eard 'im wiv my own ears. For the moment I was fair flummuxed to think that a young brother o' mine should speak to me like that, so I changed the subject.

'Ain't I told yer, over and over again, that your job ain't to put money into a business, but to take it out? Any fool can buy a business wiv cash; it takes a clever man, like me, to pull chestnuts out of a fire with other people's fingers.'

'E took it as calm as calm, and ses: 'Listen, Dave; the money went to buy furniture; Wolfenstein didn't get it.' "

"I was not aware your brother is a qualified dentist, Isaacs," I said.

"'E's not, but 'e's qualified to do the patter what's wanted, and patter's the thing, when you're playin' a schlenter game, see?'"

Anyway, they took a place in the West End and furnished it all complete wiv a reception room, an operatin' room, and a private orfice where they could 'ave a quiet game o' cards when trade was

slack. Then they 'ad a lot o' circulars printed which they sent out by post. 'Ere's one."

Isaacs pulled from his pocket a somewhat soiled copy which he read to me.

THE BRITISH EMPIRE PHILANTHROPICAL  
ASSOCIATION.

*PRESIDENT:*

PROFESSOR DEMETRIUS PEPPERPOTSKY,  
THE GREAT RUSSIAN SCIENTIST FROM THE UNIVERSITIES OF  
MOSCOW, PETROGRAD, KIEFF.

*FREE DENTISTRY.*

If you are suffering from toothache, or your teeth are decayed, or if you have no teeth, how can you eat?

If you cannot eat, slow starvation and a lingering death may stare you in the face. BUT!—

With the arrival in England of Professor Pepperpotsky pains and dangers disappear like taxis on a wet night.

His very promises of speedy rectification of disorders stagger his assistants daily, as they will surprise *you* when you know him better. Call then and learn for yourself what he can do.

It may be stated that Professor Pepperpotsky's life has been one long romance; so romantic, in fact, that many refuse to believe it.

The son of a Polish nobleman, it was early perceived that he was no ordinary boy, and when he determined to adopt the Dental profession, there was a strong opposition from his aristocratic parents who very much disliked the idea of his having to look into the mouth of, perhaps, a common peasant. This opposition was at length overcome by the intrepid youth, and after much research he discovered that painless dentistry could be performed by the use of a certain lymph. This is extracted from that evasive reptile, the Ultravires Quode Rat, whose haunts are in the snowy and dangerous recesses of the Caucasian mountains, and a pot is presented to all the fortunate patients of the Professor.

NOTE.—The Khan of Astrachan has bestowed on Professor Pepperpotsky the highest order of his Empire, viz., the order of the Leather Boot.

No connection with any firm of a similar name.

Only address: 1728 Tottenham Court Road, W.



Isaacs folded up the paper and replaced it in his pocket.

"Sully was very proud of the pictures which 'ung in the reception room," Isaacs continued, "and when I saw 'em, I thought I was in the chamber of 'orrors at Madam Twosauds. On one side of the wall they was marked 'Before Treatment,' and yer never saw such a collection. There was a portrait of a gal wiv such a swollen face as would take years of 'ot poulticin' to bring it to normal; next to it was an old woman showin' 'er toothless gums, who'd do for the first witch in Macbeth wivout any make-up; then there was a man who looked as if 'e was just comin' out of a bad attack of the 'orrors.

On the other wall they was marked 'After Treatment.' There was old ladies wiv grey 'air, not a wrinkle on their faces, wiv mouths like cupid's bows and showin' a line o' teeth suitable to a Royal Princess; there was young actresses whose curly locks was fallin' graceful over their snow-white shoulders, and whose teeth looked almost too lovely to chew roast beef or chocolates; 'andsome men wiv nicely oiled 'air and flowers in the button 'oles of their fur-lined coats. Every one was laughin'—yer never saw such a 'appy family."

"But who did the dentistry? Surely not your brother or Wolfenstein? That would be against the law," I said.

"Oh, there was a proper dentist kept," Isaacs replied. "A young chap who was lately through 'is studies. 'E did the stoppin' and pullin' out, andceterer, but 'is chief duty was to frighten the

patients, so as to get 'em on a line, so to speak. Like this.

Enter a servant gal who wants a tooth stopped. Not too flush, by 'er get-up. She takes a seat.

'Open yer mouth, please.' After a minute, she ses, pointin' wiv 'er finger, 'It's this one what wants stoppin'.'

'Yes, yes, I see that!' 'e replies, impatient. 'What I'm lookin' at is the general condition of yer mouth, which is very bad—very bad, indeed.'

'Oh, my law! what do you mean?' she asks, frightened.

'It's the worst case o' jawbatumitis I've ever seen,' 'e ses, lookin' serious at 'er.

'My goodness me, what am I to do?' she asks, almost ready to go into 'ysterics.

'I think, if you won't mind,' 'e ses, 'I'd like the opinion of the professor before I touch yer. Then we shall know where we are. One moment, please.'

'E leaves 'er to find the professor, who's bein' listenin' to what 'e said behind a curtain. When 'e comes back, followed by the professor, 'e asks 'im to look at the young lady's mouth.

Wivout lookin' at the patient, the professor says rather irritable: 'I 'ope you 'aven't called me on a triflin' matter, Mr. Percival, 'cause I've left the Dook o' Carltown for a moment.'

'This young lady's come to 'ave a tooth stopped, professor, but I thought I'd like you to examine 'er mouth before I did it, to see if I am right in my idea as to what is the real trouble,' 'e ses, very 'umble, as 'e ought to be, in the presence of the great man.

The professor sticks a glass in 'is eye, looks

inside the gal's mouth, and in a 'alf a jiffy, turns to Mr. Percival, eyes 'im severe, and ses: 'Any one can see wiv 'alf an eye this young lady is sufferin' from jawbatumitis; a troublesome disease, but took in time, it can be treated successful. I can't stop any longer, but I should say that in three months a cure could be effected. Three months, twice a week.'

And 'e goes out of the room in a terrible 'urry, so as not to keep the Dook waitin'.

By this time the gal is all of a tremble, o' course, thinkin' that life ain't worth livin'. Percival looks at 'er, and ses: 'You see, what I thought is borne out by the professor. What're yer goin' to do about it?'

'I'm only a poor gal in service, and don't earn much money,' she ses, wiv tears in 'er eyes, and bitin' the edge of her handkerchief. 'What'll it cost to cure me?'

Percival examines 'er mouth again, thinks for a bit, makes a lot o' calculations on a bit o' paper which tot up to about fifteen pound. When 'e shows 'em to 'er she gives a little shriek.

'My gracious!' she ses, 'I can't afford all that lot! Why, it's my wages for weeks and weeks, and I should 'ave nothink left to buy myself a new 'at wiv for Easter, not to mention a coat and skirt I'm 'avin' made; a blue serge trimmed wiv broad black braid——'

Percival ain't a bit interested in female decorations—at least not in business—so 'e waives all that on one side as 'e asks 'er what she's goin' to do about 'avin' the complaint treated, and as she's nearly frightened out of 'er wits, she agrees to pay

so much a week to 'ave some nasty tastin' water squirted into 'er mouth, and a tooth stopped into the bargain.

Sometimes the gag didn't come awf, though. One day a pretty gal come in for free treatment, as she thought, and when Wolfenstein examined 'er mouth and told 'er she was very bad and would cost fifteen guineas to put right, she talked to 'im straight, then 'e said 'e couldn't stop talkin' any longer, 'cause the Marquis o' Sniffenshire was waitin' for 'im in the next room.

'Go on wiv yer,' she ses, 'there ain't such a person.'

'Oh, isn't there?' 'e ses. 'E's 'ere at this moment. What's more 'e's willin' to pay a 'underd guineas for what I'm only chargin' you fifteen.'

'You tell that to the marines—not to me,' the gal ses. 'I know every peer of the realm, 'cause I was lady's maid to the Countess o' Swoffem. You and the Marquis o' Sniffenshire! You know more about the Earl o' Bunkum, I should say.' And she marched out o' the room, givin' Wolfenstein a look what made 'im feel as cheap as collar studs at four a penny.

Another time trade was lost through Wolfenstein keepin' a man waitin' too long before 'e saw 'im; a farmer sort o' chap who came into the place smellin' so strong o' cows the room 'ad to be disinfected to get rid of it.

Sully and Wolfenstein was playin' a game o' poker when the assistant announced 'im, and as Wolfenstein 'ad a good 'and, 'e didn't want to be disturbed.

'Tell 'im I'm engaged wiv the Earl o' Earlville;

give 'im a pamphlet to read, and say I'll see 'im in a few minutes,' ses Wolfenstein. Then goin' on wiv 'is game, 'e ses to Sully, 'Let's see, it's 'alf a dollar to play—there it is; I raise yer five bob; you raise me another? Well, what 'ave yer got? Two pairs? I've got three little sixes. My money.'

They got so interested in their game, that Wolfenstein clean forgot the farmer, who, after waitin' a long time, peeped inside the room and caught 'em.

'Are you Professor Pepperpotsky?' 'e asks in a very loud voice, annoyin' Wolfenstein considerable 'cause 'e'd got four kings at that moment.

'What d'yer mean interruptin' me in my professional work?' demands Wolfenstein. 'I'm tellin' this gentleman's fortune by the cards. 'Ow dare yer come in 'ere wivout permission?' Then 'e got a whiff of the country air the gent 'ad brought wiv 'im. 'And bringin' this awful smell into my surgery,' 'e ses, pullin' out 'is 'andkerchief to 'is nose.

'What do *you* mean by keepin' me waitin' all this time while you're playin' wiv them dirty cards?' the farmer ses, glarin' at 'im wiv 'is fist shut tight and ready for use. 'I've been waitin' 'ere to talk about my teeth, and you send out some lyin' message about bein' engaged wiv Earls and suchlike, and all the time you're playin' cards, yer dirty-faced, greasy-lookin' 'Ebrew. Take that!' 'e ses, givin' Wolfenstein a punch on the face what knocked 'im awf 'is chair and upset the cards all over the place. 'Now get up, and I'll knock yer

'ead awf yer shoulders, you flabby-lookin' lump o' tripe!'

But Wolfenstein wasn't such a fool. 'E lay where 'e was and called out for the police, while my brother ran out o' the place to find one, or pretend to. When 'e come back, the man 'ad gone. Wolfenstein asked why Sully 'adn't stopped to defend 'im, and when Sully said 'e'd been out to find a policeman, Wolfenstein said 'e was glad 'e 'adn't, 'cause they didn't want the police comin' botherin' about there.

'Never know what they're after,' 'e said.

And that remark gave me a tip," Isaacs said. "I was so wild that Sully should put what I look on as my money into a business wivout tellin' me, I made up my mind to get some of it back.

So I waited my time, and when Sully fell ill, I took steps, as you say. I went up West and got myself a nice ginger wig wiv a moustache to match, and down I went to Tottenham Court Road.

'Professor Pepperpotsky in?' I asks, official.

The assistant, lookin' at me as if 'e was sizin' me up from a what-are-yer-worth point o' view, ses: 'Is it about your teeth? 'Cause if so, I'll 'ave to keep yer waitin', the professor bein' engaged wiv the Dook o'——'

'Don't play that kind o' patter wiv me,' I ses, very severe, as I pulled out a bit o' blue paper and begun to read. 'Go and say I want to see 'im immediate.'

'E made for the door quicker than a dog can bark, and in a moment or two I was shown into the inside room, where the professor was sittin' readin' a book as if studyin' somethink very deep.

When 'e looked up I could see 'e wasn't any too comfortable.

'Are you Professor Pepperpotsky?' I asks.

'That's my name. What can I do for you?' 'e answers.

'I'm from the Yard,' I ses. 'Your name's Wolfenstein, ain't it?'

'It is,' 'e ses, puttin' the book down on the table quick.

'What was yer name before it was Wolfenstein?' I demands, very short, like them barristers in the courts.

'Hirtzberg,' 'e ses, fidgetin' about in 'is chair.

I took out the bit o' blue paper again, and made as if I was readin' it.

'What was the last term of imprisonment you served, and what for?' I asks, eyein' 'im as if I was a judge.

'Three years for arson,' 'e replies, as frightened as a cat caught stealin'.

'Very well,' I ses, checkin' awf 'is replies on the paper wiv ticks, as if I'd got it down there before 'e told me. 'Now, it is my duty to tell yer that all you've said will be used in evidence against yer at the trial, unless arrangements are made prompt.'

'E was on 'is feet in a tic, and come towards me pleadin' like.

'I'll make any arrangement yer like, inspector. What can I do? Things are goin' so well 'ere, I can afford to pay.'

'You're carryin' on a snide dentist's business, and swindlin' a confidin' public; that's what you're doin'.' I ses, as 'e sat down on a chair and put 'is

'ands up to 'is 'ead, which 'e shook. 'And,' I goes on as if I meant to take 'im then and there, 'it's my duty to quod yer at once. But as you're tryin' to reform, and me bein' a merciful man, I'll let yer awf wiv fifty to-day, and fifty to-morrow. In notes,' I ses.

'Can't yer make it any less, inspector?' 'e asks, tryin' to do a deal and save a bit.

'If my terms ain't accepted on the nail, it'll be necessary to report yer to-night, and issue a warrant to-morrow,' I ses, gettin' ready to go.

To cut it short, I got the 'underd what Sully owed me out of 'im, and when Sully told me what 'ad 'appened, I said I 'oped it'd be a lesson to 'im not to do business wiv wrong-uns.

When I met Sully and Wolfenstein in the Mile End Road a fortnight afterwards, I noticed that Wolfenstein looked at me very 'ard; very 'ard indeed. So I passed 'em by, givin' Sully a nod, and takin' no notice o' Wolfenstein.

Then Sully come to me and demanded the money back, and it was that we was talkin' about when we met you. 'E was threatenin' to sue me for it, and I was tellin' 'im that as I never did any such thing as to impersonate the police, and 'adn't 'ad the money, and anyway, Wolfenstein 'adn't got a witness, 'e 'ad as much chance o' gettin' back the cash as a nigger 'as o' changin' 'is colour. And after thinkin' it over, I expect 'e come to the conclusion it was no good comin' to see you."

"But Isaacs, tell me," I said, "how did you know that Wolfenstein's name was really Hirtzberg, and that he had been in gaol."

"I didn't till 'e told me. But I'd watched them



chaps in the law courts, and took a tip from them. 'Alf o' their business is bluff, and they get the witnesses to give away their own cases."

"But, at least, you ought to have warned Wolfenstein *before* you examined him, that what he said might be used against him," I protested.

"If yer talk like that, I shall lose all respect for yer," he replied. "If I'd done that, 'e'd never 'ave opened 'is mouth. I know the Yidden too well to make such a bloomer as that."

"Well, what became of the business after all?" I asked.

"Oh, I draw two quid a week as a sort o' sleepin' pardner," he answered, laughing.

"Whatever for?" I asked, not understanding how he had any interest in it.

"Well, yer see, after what Wolfenstein told me about 'imself, ain't it natural I should want payin' to keep my mouth shut?" he asked, looking at me as if his question was a most reasonable one, and rising to go. "

And as he left, I found myself ruminating on the capability of the human mind for perversion.

## CHAPTER XVI

### ISAACS: IMPRESARIO

**I**SAACS had not been to see me for some time, and I had almost come to the conclusion he had found another legal adviser. I was therefore glad, on entering my office one wet morning, to find him sitting in the outer room waiting for me.

Without any form of greeting he glanced up and said, "You look as if you'd been practisin' for a full-dress life savin' competition."

"Naturally," I replied. "I've been out in all this rain."

"Not all of it," he said. "I've been out in some of it. You don't own the lot, yer know."

When I had taken off my dripping overcoat and hat and we were comfortably seated before the fire in my room, I said, as he lit one of those beastly cigarettes he called a "lung slayer," "I haven't seen you recently, Isaacs. Have you been ill, or merely busy?"

"Trade's been very quiet lately," he answered. "Nothin' doin' at all. None o' my business connections seem to 'ave any openin' for the investment of either capital or brains. 'Specially brains, which is my specialty. I got fair fed-up chewin' my finger-nails awf tryin' to think o' some way o' drawin' the dibs, when one mornin', outside the butchers' shops in Aldgate, who should I meet but old Strausmann——"

“That’s a new name to me, Isaacs. Is he a—er—client of yours?”

“’E was—till lately. When I saw ’im standin’ there, lookin’ at the scraps, and tryin’ to make up ’is mind whether it should be a scrag o’ mutton or a marrer bone, I got an idea. It flashed across me quick as a taxi suddenly turnin’ a corner as you’re steppin’ awf the curb. I think it was because ’e was in ’is Shobos (Sabbath) clothes what give it to me. When ’e’s dressed up in them, as ’e is every Friday and Saturday, you’d take your oath ’e’s either a clever old rabbi or a doctor o’ philosophy, or a—well, whatever you took ’im for, you’d never think ’e’d done time for passin’—unauthorised notes and gilded sixpenny bits, and ceterer, and ceterer. I always say long white ’air and a flowin’ grey beard’s worth four or five quid a week to any man if ’e knows ’ow to wear ’em, and ’is back’s a bit bent. I shall never forget ’ow indignant ’e was when some rude boy told ’im ’e was robbin’ the barber.

‘Vot for should I from mein ’ead der ’air cut off?’ ’e asked me, almost cryin’. ‘Don’t dey in dis country say “honourable are der grey ’airs”?’ Undt mit der proverb dey kvite right are. For ven I gets into der crush among der laties into der buses skveezin, vile my oldt ’and is ’elpin’ itself to der purse inside der bag on der arm, undt I calls oudt, “Don’t push der oldt mans mit der grey ’airs; don’t break der pones of der oldt age.”

‘Undt ven I’ve got vot I comes for, undt I calls, “Let me oudt! Oh, mein Gott, let me oudt of dis terrible crush or I shall be to der death skveezed!” der tender vimmens says, “Let der poor oldt mans

free!" Undt as der fat voman speaks it, not knowin' I've got 'er purse, I look at 'er mit der eyes of sadness, and say, "Tenk you, young laty; you respect der grey 'airs."

'But der grey 'airs 'elps der oldt man to der goot meal. To 'ave der 'air from der 'ead cut off vouldt be der barber a vig to give for nothin'; for me, it vouldt be to lose my livings.'

And the old man's right; his 'air's 'is capital, same as what I've got *under* mine's, mine. But I'm forgettin'. I ses to 'im friendly like, 'Nathan,' I ses, 'ow's things?'

'Ah, vos dat you, David? T'ings? 'Ow's t'ings? Oh, up undt down, up undt down,' 'e ses, noddin' 'is old 'ead at me. 'Vun week I'm a tokkuf (swell), rich enough to puy der salmon; next, a schlamil (unfortunate), glad to get der bit of plaice from der fried fish shop. Vun week, undt der purses vos shop gerls', full o' coppers; der next, chorus laties mit der furs, and purses made o' gelt. But dere, tenk Gawd, tenk Gawd, my fingers 'aven't deir touch lost, and I can still vork—still vork, undt be independent.'

To get 'im into a good humour I reminded 'im of what I'd 'eard about the old days when 'e was in a big way o' business. An artful glint come into the faded old eyes under the bushy grey eyebrows, and 'is 'and combed 'is beard as 'e said, 'Ah! der oldt days—der oldt days. No, t'ings now is different to dem. Den, it vas dinner at der Café Royal or der Continental, in der evening dress mit der real diamont in der vite shirt front; der vite tie—I used to puy dem by der dozen in Piccadilly

—reaty made vuns—twelf for elefen undt six;—  
der patent leat'er shoes. . . .

*Undt* der pretty gerls mit der fluffy 'air, undt der dresses cut low in der neck. I often used to vonder ven I 'eard 'em talk togedder of der "low necks," vere der neck ends undt der chest begins. It's my belief, David, dat style of dress vos invented by der bronchitis doctors. I t'ink dat now, but in dose days I liked dem better dan der champagne at a fortune a bottle. Ah! vot fools ve vas! I used to sip it down tryin' to make myself believe dere was no flavour like it in der vorldt. But efery time I sipped it, it seemed like a shilling goin' down my t'roat.

Undt der coffee at sixpence a t'imbleful! Dat vas a schvindle, undt I used to try to get der gerls to see it my vay. But vat you dink? Dey liked der coffee, but more dey liked der brandy to put in it.

But der gerls!' (You should 'ave seen the twinkle in 'is wicked old eye when 'e spoke of the fair sect.) 'Der gerls! Dat vos der t'ings!' 'E come close to me as 'e whispered, 'I tells you a secret, David. Dere's nefer no difficulty in gettin' der gerls ven you got der gelt. Remember dat.

I often vonder vat becomes of all der gerls ve vas friendts mit. Der beautiful gerls mit der silk stockings, der dainty leetle shoes; der lace shawl on der 'ead to keep der fluffy 'air from blowin' ven ve takes der cab to der music-'all. Vere are dey now, dose pretty gerls? Some married mit der grandchildren; some not married, but mit der grandchildren all der same; some dead, undt some—I saw vun the udder day in der Vest End vere

I'd gone to do my vork ven it vas dark. A poor shrivelled-up t'ing mit a visp o' grey 'air on der fore'ead; a shawl over der bent shoulders, vich vent up undt down like der leetle boat in der rough sea, ven she coughed. Der boots vas broke across der treads, der skirt vas ragged at the foots, der face vas 'ollow undt as grey as my beard. It vas 'er eyes dat toldt me who it vas. Dey 'ad in dem a leetle of der look she used to give ven she vas, for some reason, not gay. Ven she saw me standing lookin' at 'er, she said, "Box o' lights, sir?" undt 'eld out 'er 'and mit two boxes in it.

Undt dere you are. Such is der life ven der 'eart is young. For der young, dere's always der pleasure, undt always vill be. Always der dinner undt der t'eatre at night, undt der breakfast in bed der next day. Dere's nefer der illness undt der oldt age for you; all der bad luck undt all der misfortunes is for der udder vun, nefer for you, nefer. Vy, if I 'ad all der monies I used to t'row into der cash boxes of der Vest End restaurants——'

'Never mind that,' I ses, gettin' a bit tired of the old un's yarn, 'you're on your uppers, and I've come to yer like a fairy godmother to make yer rich without doin' my work!' 'E looked at me suspicious like, 'cause it ain't the 'abit o' my people to make other people rich in that easy-goin' fashion, yer know.

'Vere's der trick?' 'e ses, lookin' at me under 'is bushy eyebrows.

'Between you and me there is a trick,' I ses, confidential like, 'but that's the one we play on the public.'

'Vell, vat is it?' 'e asks me, impatient.

'It's like this. All I want you to do is to sit in a chair on a stage and be the centre of a crowd of admirin' men and women. Specially women.' I ses, impressive like, knowin' the old boy still fancied 'is looks. 'There's piles o' money in it, and we divide on the square—'alf and 'alf.' '' Isaacs drew one hand across the centre of the other.

" 'Ow much?' 'e asks.

I put on my thinkin' cap and thought 'ard and severe, 'cause I 'ad only just got the idea of 'ow I could use 'im. I made out some calculations in a low voice, but so's 'e could 'ear.

'Two 'underd people at a bob a time, ten pounds; 'underd more at one and six, seven pounds ten; 'underd more at sixpence, two pounds ten; say twenty pounds. Less exes, say five quid; a clear fifteen pounds a night. That's seven pounds ten each, not to speak of the raffle, which ought to be good for another tenner.'

The old un's eyes fairly twinkled when 'e 'eard me addin' up the money. But I took no notice of 'im, goin' on as if to myself, 'Say ten nights at twenty clear profit—two 'underd—a 'underd to 'im,' I ses, as if 'e was miles away, and a 'underd to me; less 'property' exes of, say, forty pounds—that's twenty each——'

'Vat's dat about twenty each, expenses?' 'e burst in. But me bein' too busy with finances, I passed the question over, sayin' to myself in a 'alf whisper, 'Exes, twenty each. Twenty from a 'underd leaves eighty quid clear profit for ten days' work of two hours a day. It's a gold mine,' I ses, talkin' to myself, but so's 'e could 'ear; and goin' on I asks

myself, 'Why should I let anybody in with a clear 'alf of the profit of eighty pounds unless 'e puts up all the first expenses?' Then I turns to 'im and says, indifferent like, 'Never mind, Nathan; I'm sorry to 'ave begun to talk over a bit o' business, which, after all, may not suit you. Glad to see yer lookin' so well.' And I turned as if to go.

But 'e wasn't lettin' me off so easy as that; he smelt somethin' good, and with the Jew instinct, was after the main chance.

'E 'ooked me by the button 'ole of my coat.

'Tell me more about it, David. Ve've known each odder der long times; don't I remember ven you sold der papers in Liverpool Street? Didn't I somedimes give you a penny to buy der sweets?'

'Not often,' I tells 'im, to let 'im see 'e couldn't come the sentimental tack on me.

'Tell me more about it, undt perhaps I can manage to scrape up der twenty pounds.'

'Forty,' I ses.

'You says "twenty" as plain as der vart on my nose,' 'e 'alf shouts at me. 'Der profits vas a 'underd poundts, undt mit der exbenses knocked off, it vas eighty. If dat ain't twenty poundts, I'll eat trifer for my dinner.'

'I was talkin' to meself; it wasn't for you to 'ear, and I'm surprised you should listen,' I ses as if I was annoyed. 'But since I said it, I ain't one to go away from a bargain. And now I must 'urry away and buy the things to make ready for the business.'

'But vat is der peeziness?' 'e asks, eager.

'I'm keepin' it a secret for a few days. I don't



want you tellin' your friends 'ow we are goin' to make a fortune between us. All you've got to do is to get your Shobos togs packed up ready to go into the country; to learn 'ow to read from a paper—I'll show yer 'ow to do that. And,' I ses, as a partin' warnin', 'be ready with the twenty when I comes along in a few days, 'cause I got to pay spot cash and——'

'You'll bring der receipts, David, so I can see dere's nothin' schlechter (wrong). I'm a poor man, and 'ave to vork, as you know, very 'ard for my livin'; undt dere's always der risk, I take,' 'e whined like a whipped pup.

'I will,' I ses. 'When I goes into a deal with a pal——'

'I 'ave 'eard t'ings about you, David,' 'e interrupted, but I cut 'im short, reprov'in' 'im very severe.

'Them as works with David Isaacs must go straight, or there'll be trouble. Remember that, Nathan.'

And I left 'im there so dazed with the brilliancy of 'is prospects, that when I'd gone a little distance and looked round, 'e was still standin' in the middle o' the pavement a-combin' 'is beard wiv 'is fingers, and starin' at nothin'.

Of course, as you know, it ain't usual for a star artist, when 'e's runnin' a show, to put down 'is own dross; what 'e does is to get a syndicate together to finance it, 'im drawin' a fat salary weekly. So I considered I'd done a good stroke to get Strausmann to put up the dibs. So it would 'ave been—but that's previous.

After I'd left Strausmann, I passed a pawnbroker's and, as is my custom, I glanced in at the winder. I give you a tip. Never pass a popshop—you can't tell when you'll see an unredeemed pledge for sale, underpriced. Why, I once——'

"Cut that out, Isaacs, and get on with the narrative."

"Well, there, starin' at me, was the very things I wanted. A row of 'em. So in I goes and asks the price of a lot of articles I *didn't* mean to buy; then, casting my optic on the things I *did* want, I asks, 'Oh, what are them funny coloured glass pictures in the winder?'

'They're lantern slides,' 'e says, 'used in schools an' such like. Not much sale for 'em nowadays; the cinema's knocked the demand.'

'Got many?' I asks.

'Dozens, an' goin' cheap, too, if you want any.'

I picked about three dozen; views of foreign parts, animals and such like.

'I don't really want 'em,' I ses, 'but if they're the right price, I might take some to 'ang up in a green'ouse I'm buildin'.'

I bought 'em for fifteen pence a-piece, and got a bill made out without the price on it, tellin' the man I only wanted it to remind me 'ow many I'd bought.

'Put paid to it,' I ses. 'I'll fetch 'em away to-morrow.'

Next day I brought a litery bloke I know down to the shop—'e's a reporter for one o' the papers, always 'ard up, and always thirsty. After 'e'd examined the pictures and taken a note of each one we went out, and I ses:

'Now what will you charge me to write a lecture—a real instructive lecture on the war, with them slides as illustrations? Somethin' with a bit of 'umour thrown in, but chiefly instructive. It's for a charity affair I'm gettin' up, so make it cheap.'

'When d'you want it?' 'e asks, wiv 'is cigarette bobbin' up and down in 'is lips as 'e talked.

'Few days.'

'Ten bob and four whiskies when I bring it,' 'e ses. 'But I tell you straight, them slides ain't worth writin' a police court "par" about.'

'Never you mind about that. I engage you to do the lecture, and,' I ses, regardin' 'im stern like, 'I give you a word of advice. Mind yer keep sober till you've wrote it; after, you can drink a distillery dry, if yer like.'

'No writer could do anything with a lot o' muck like that, unless 'e was drunk,' 'e ses. 'I got to paint that crocodile you got among 'em in fancy colours; drink's the only thing to give yer the ideas necessary for the job.'

I give 'im five bob on account, and 'e went off quick, promisin' to let me 'ave a lecture what'd knock the war correspondents silly if they ever 'eard it.

Then I went back to the popshop to ask the man there if 'e knew any one who could work a magic lantern.

'Not only know 'im,' 'e told me, 'but I've 'ad 'is machine 'ere every month or two for years. The slides you bought come from the same party.'

'E give me the address, and I 'anded 'im one o' my best cigars—like I gave you once—remember?'

"I do, Isaacs; I shall never forget it," I said feelingly. He missed the irony of the remark.

"Well, be good, and one o' these days you may get another.

The lantern man lived off the Bethnal Green Road in one o' them three-storey terrace 'ouses run up by jerry builders, which are only kep' from fallin' down through bein' tied together by the dividin' walls. Some o' the railin's was missin'; most of the winders was broke and patched wiv brown paper; the door knocker was gone; the stone copin' on the roof was loose, and only wanted a good strong wind to blow it down.

A bricklayer told me once that if that sort o' 'ouse was built separate, and a man come 'ome on a Saturday and lunched agin the wall, it'd be a miracle if the roof didn't fall in from the shock.

I knocked at the door with my stick, but no one come; so I kicked at it wiv my foot to make more noise. At last it was opened by a little tousle-'aired gal wiv a slice o' bread and jam in 'er 'and, some of it decoratin' the outer edges of 'er mouth.

'Does Mr. Vickery live 'ere?' I asked.

'Dunno. We've only jest moved in,' she answers, takin' another bite at 'er banquet.

'Do you live on this floor?'

'No, we're in the basement; try there,' she says, pointin' to a door off the passage.

I knocked at it, but got no answer, so I turned the 'andle and opened the door. A man wiv three days' growth on 'is face was layin' in bed, smokin'. On the table, 'andy, was a pot o' beer.

'Wot the 'ell do you want?' 'e ses, very gruff, and glarin' at me.

'I was tryin' to find where Mr. Vickery lives,' I ses, very polite, not likin' 'is expression.

'Oh, you was, was yer? Well, that don't give you the right to enter the 'ome of a respectable, 'ard-workin' man, does it? Don't you know that an Englishman's 'ome is 'is castle? I'm a good mind to——'

'Ave a cigar,' I ses quick to mollify 'im, as I saw 'im gettin' ready to 'op out o' bed. I 'anded 'im one o' my 'second's,' knowin' it'd be waste to offer 'im one such as I give you—occasionally. 'E seemed to take a likin' to the red and gold band round it and become more civil.

Takin' a swig o' beer, which seemed to soothe 'im, 'e ses, 'Vickery's on the second floor back when 'e's in, and when 'e's sober.'

As I turned to leave, 'e adds, 'As you go out mind and see the door's shut; don't leave go o' the 'andle till you 'ear it click; and don't pull the door wiv too much of a jerk—the bottom 'inge's off.'

On the first landin' I tripped twice and nearly broke my neck, owin' to the dark and me not seein' the 'oles in the floorcloth. The last time I saved myself by fallin' against a fat woman wiv a bundle in 'er arms comin' out o' the first floor front.

'Oh, you're 'ere agin, are yer?' she ses to me as if I was a regular visitor. 'I thought I told yer last week me old man wouldn't be out for a fortnight, and until 'e comes th' rent must wait. I don't know what you've got to grumble at; I'm only five weeks be'ind. Anyway, you ain't got a

chance, for there ain't a penny in my pocket or a bite in the 'ouse. What's more, I'm jest takin' the blankets to "Uncle's," to get food for the three kids. So it's no use talkin' and threatenin'. I'm sick of it, straight I am.'

Then she looked at me again and saw she'd made a mistake.

'Oh,' she ses. 'I thought you was Steiner's man.' And wiv that she squeegeed by me while I found my way up the next flight.

The second floor back was opened by a tall scrawny sort of a woman, who didn't give me a chance to say what I'd come for.

'Now look 'ere, it's no use your callin',' she ses. 'We've 'ad three 'ere already this week, pitchin' their psalmses and 'ymn books at us, and we don't want any more.'

'Any more what?' I ses, took aback, but keepin' polite, as is my 'abit.

'Any more what! Why, Distrik Visitors. Come pokin' your noses where you ain't wanted! Tellin' us what we ought to do to be saved! 'Ow we ought to part the children's 'air! 'Ow they should be washed! 'Ow cleanliness is next to gawdliness! You go and bring two or three pounds o' good beef steak, and I'll do the rest! Don't talk to me about what's goin' to 'appen to us after we're dead. What I want to know is, where I'm to get food to keep 'em alive. That's the point. 'Ang you an' your chapels.'

When I told 'er I'd come to see Mr. Vickery on a matter o' business, and that Distrik Visitin' wasn't in my line, she looked at me close.

'I made a mistake; I see you ain't; you're one o' the breed what buys up 'ouses in these parts and then lets 'em out in rooms at double their value. Man!' she calls over 'er shoulder, 'some one for you!' and left me standin' at the door, while she went back into the room to get on with 'er work.

'Man' got up from a table where 'e was tinkerin' at some part of a machine, and comin' to the door, asked me what 'e could 'ave the pleasure of doin' for me. Seein' there wasn't too much room inside, I suggested it'd be more convenient to talk over our business outside.

Mr. Manderville Vickery was about my 'eight, but, lord! 'e *was* thin.

"Thinner than you, Isaacs?" I asked.

"Thinner than me! I'm a Lord Mayor's coachman alongside 'im! 'E was so thin that if 'e'd stood sideways on a dusky evenin', you couldn't 'ave seen 'im twenty yards away. 'Cept for 'is nose, which was a reg'lar danger signal. It wasn't the pimply blotchy sort which belongs to the daily boozier, but the coloured carmine nose o' the man who drinks 'imself drunk for a week on end, and then is on the teetotal for a month. Against 'is pale face 'is nose stood out like the tail light of a motor-car.

'Is get-up in dress showed a wide range o' fancy. 'E wore a cloth travellin' cap like them savages who come from the North o' England to see the final in the football ties at the Crystal Palace; 'is frock-coat—which was never made for 'im, I'll swear—*had* been black; but now, it was a mixture o' sage green and brown, nicely variegated, from

the lapels down, with 'menoos' o' eggs and bacon and various gravies; 'is trousers was a light fawn, 'cept at the knees where they'd gone white with wear. The whole outfit was completed wiv a pair o' brown boots, down at 'eel, and broke across the treads. It give *me* a bit of a surprise, but I'm positively certain if the Editor of the *Tailor and Cutter* 'ad come across Vickery, the shock would 'ave killed 'im—or nearly. To a man so well up in dress as to be able to tell yer if the openin' of the vest should be seven or eight inches deep; if the trousers must be sixteen or eighteen inches wide at the ankle, such a sight'd nacherally make 'is sensitive nature suffer 'orrible.

When I'd explained I wanted 'im to go on a tour with me as lantern operator, we soon fixed up terms, and givin' 'im ten bob to bind the bargain 'e went off delighted.

Also I was glad when the reporter brought me the lecture, typed out, to time. After I'd paid 'im, 'e ses, 'It's cost me a lot o' time and thought to write it, and I only 'ope them as 'ears it'll get the same pleasure as I 'ave 'ad in doin' it.'

'Well, it's money easy made,' I replies, 'so while you're 'ere, just sit down and write me the advertisin' matter for the posters.'

'That'll be five bob extra,' 'e ses as cool as a constable in the witness box.

'Are you a Jew!' I shouted at 'im. 'Ain't I——'

'Another 'alf a dollar for the insult,' ses 'e, never turnin' a 'air.

It took me 'alf an hour before I could make 'im reasonable.



'Ere it is; read it."

Isaacs handed me a bill on which was printed:

# WAR!

The Famous French Alsation Refugee and Savant Count Athos Lafayette de la Fontaine, who, by a miracle, escaped the clutches of the Germans by leaving his native town of Oberville secretly in the spring of 1913—only fifteen months before the enemy commenced the pillage of Belgium—will give his startling Lecture

"THE WAR, AND WHAT I SHOULD HAVE SEEN BUT FOR MY PRESCIENCE,"

with coloured illustrations.

NOTE.—A startling Novelty will be presented during the interval, which MAY RESULT IN PERSONAL PROFIT TO THOSE ATTENDING.

Manager, Mr. David E. Isaacs, F.W.S.S.

"What do those letters mean, Isaacs?" I asked.

"I never bothered to ask till I met the writer after the lecture. 'E said they stood for 'Fellow of the Whitechapel Schlenter Society.' Like 'is cheek writin' such things! And 'im talkin' about insults! What's that, I'd like to know?"

"An irrelevant observation," I said. "Proceed, please."

"'Aving arranged for the 'ire of a 'all in a certain country town, and fixed up the advertisin' in the local papers; 'avin' seen to the postin' of the posters, and, most important of all, 'avin' touched Strausmann for the twenty quid, which just covered the first expenses—my own included, o' course—everything was tooty-frooty, as the I-talians say, for the night.

Accordin', Vickery, Strausmann and me got there early on the day, which give Vickery time to

fix 'is sheet and lantern, and 'ave a little re'earsal like.

The great thing in business is to look after the cash, so while I told Vickery to open the door and then rush past the ticket orifice to the barrier and take 'em from the people, I stayed in the cash box and collected the money.

It was most excitin' before the doors opened. I went down to the entrance door, and could 'ear the people talkin' outside. Crowds of 'em. I thought they'd never stop comin' in. The 'all was packed.

When I added up the takin's I counted over eighteen pounds.

'Wot oh!' I ses to meself, 'that fancy estimate I made for old Strausmann won't be far wrong after all,' and I couldn't help laughin' as I shovelled the cash into the leather bag I'd brought for the purpose.

I only 'oped Strausmann wouldn't make a bloomer in readin' the lecture which I'd made 'im practise over and over again, till 'e was 'fair sick of it,' as 'e said.

As I led 'im on to the platform, a stick in one of 'is 'ands and me 'oldin' 'im by the other to make 'im look more feeble like, I couldn't 'elp noticin' what an imposin' old feller 'e was wiv 'is wrinkled face, 'is long white 'air almost fallin' on to 'is shoulders and 'is grey whiskers climbin' down on to 'is chest. The audience give the old French refugee tumulchous applause, as we took our seats on the platform.

After it 'ad died down a bit I 'eard a lady 'alf whisper to 'er 'usband, 'Any one could see wiv

'alf an eye, 'e's French. Observe 'is 'igh-bridged nose. Only Frenchmen of the old rejime 'ave noses of that kind. Notice 'is distingy appearance. When I was in France——'

'Why, you've only been to Boolong!' 'er 'us-band chips in.

'All the French nobility lives in Boolong,' she says, squashin' 'im, 'so's to be ready to skip over to England in case o' internal troubles.'

'Ere, somebody says 'sh-sh,' so she turns round, gives 'em the scornful sniff and shuts up.

The 'ouse bein' 'ushed, I rose and ses, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, I 'ave the pleasure of interducin' to your notice the celebrated French count, Count Athos Lafayette de la Fontaine, who I 'ave engaged at great expense to lecture to the people of this great country upon the War.

The Count is the last of the noble family who first settled in the part of the world 'e comes from, and who 'ave always been noted for their energy in speakin' on be'alf of their oppressed land, All-sayis, or as the Germans calls it, "El-sauce." After the first part of the lecture I shall 'ave the honour of offerin' you a little surprise which I 'ope will be welcome.' (Applause, durin' which I set down, and the Count, puttin' on a pair o' 'orn spectacles, like the Chinkies wear down the Commercial Road, stood up and took 'is place at the readin' desk and commenced 'is bit.) I'll give yer an imitation of a small portion.

He drew from his pocket a crumpled manuscript and read: 'Laties undt Shentlemans, I 'ave der pleasure to shpeak as a French Noplemans to a lot of Englischer noble mens undt vimmins. Vy

nople, you may ask? For der reply, I propound der t'eory dat since an Englander vonce wrote of 'is countrymen as der Nople Prithish Race, it is so. Der Englischer don't lies tell. Derefore, if I am der Nople because of my title, you vas nople mitout it. So as Euclid vould say, "Q.E.D.," vich means in der translation, "Quod Eternally Disgraces"; vich again may be rendered, "Dat's der icicle limits."

I shpeak to you of my natif coundtry vich is called by some "Alsace"; by der oders, "Awlsace"; some bronounce it, "Ahlzace"; vile der Englischers who 'ave been dere, calls it "Allsauce," p'raps because of der vay der meat 'ides itselluf in der plates at der two franc fifty Table d'Hôtes in der Cook's Hotels.

Laties undt Shentlemans, I vas born near der Blue Alsation Mountains. Undt vat a blue dey are!' ('Ere I stomped my foot twice on the floor to tell the gasman to lower the lights and to tell Vickery to throw 'is first picture on the screen. This bein' done, the Count paused a minute to allow the audience to admire.)

'Why, it's marked "Snowdon from Llanberis"! a little girl said aloud, causin' a 'ubbub among the audience. 'Earin' which, I stomped my foot for the lights to go up again, immediate.

'If that sweet little intelligent child will come up to the platform after the interval, she shall be rewarded for 'er perspicutioness,' I said, which put 'em all in a good temper. Then turnin' to the lecturer, I ses impressive, 'Proceed, Count, I pray.'

'Vy vas dey called der Blue Alsation Mountains, mein friendts?' 'e went on. 'I tells you vy. It's

because der precious stones like der Sapphires, der Topazes vas found dere. Undt, my tear friendts, after I 'ave finished der first part of my lecture, der manager, Mr. Isaacs, will show you some, undt make you a proposal for your goot. Do der Englischer laties love der precious stones? Vell, dey shall 'ave dem.'

('Ere 'e 'ad to pause a few moments till the excitement died down.)

'Der atmosphere of der Blue Alsation mountains is blue; der vasser—der vater is blue, undt even der speeches of der natives is blue—der men's especially bein' very dark tinted. Der Englischers so loved my country dey wanted to buy it all, undt to get subscriptions to der scheme, dey 'ad a song wrote. It vas called "Buy der Blue Alsation Mountains." Dey vanted der Sapphires undt der Topazes, you see. But der Germans 'eard of it undt vent to der War undt so got der whole of my luffy Allsauces. Ah, mein——'

"Never mind reading any more of that, Isaacs," I said. "Come to the exciting incidents, if there are any."

Isaacs regarded me as if I had done him an injury. He had got into the heart of the stuff and was reeling it off with the dramatic effect of the actor. He put it away in his pocket and continued:

"All that part of the lecture dealin' wiv the precious stones was my idea; I told the writer to pop that in. For a reason, as you will see.

When Strausmann comes to the words, 'Undt dat, Laties undt Shentlemans, finishes der end of der first part of my lecture,' I 'ops on my feet and told 'em 'ow, as a thanksgivin' to celebrate 'is

escape from the Germans, the Count 'ad determined to offer a ring o' real gold set with Sapphire brilliants which 'e 'imself 'ad found in the Blue Alsatian Mountains.

' 'Ere it is,' I ses, pullin' it out of my pocket and 'oldin' it up so as they could all see it as I flashed it about, to make the stones glitter. 'And,' I ses, 'knowin' the charitable 'eart of the public, 'and so as it shall be drawn for quite fair, I'm goin' to ask you to each pay a paltry shillin' for a ticket. The total amount to go to the 'ome for distressed French refugees, the Treasurer bein' the Count, 'is very self. I shall now come among you with my assistant and 'and round the tickets. Please 'ave your shillin's ready.'

Me and Vickery bustled round the 'all collectin' the merry little bobs as 'ard as we could. Between us we took over twelve quid for a ring which cost me two pun ten.

Four gents come on to the platform to see all fair, and the lady who won it also come up to receive it, titterin' and flustered. I 'anded the ring to Strausmann who put it on 'er finger to the sound o' ringin' cheers. And when 'e said to 'er, 'Laty, Count Athos Lafayette de la Fontaine 'as der honour to offer you der most unique souvenir of der great war. Ven you vears it, t'ink of der 'orrible dangers 'e passed t'rough ven 'e escaped from der cruel 'ands of der Bavarians, der Saxons and der Prussians who vas plottin' 'is destruction in der year nineteen t'irteen,' I thought the roof'd come off. I did, straight.

The second part of the lecture went flat, and by the time a crocodile was shown on the screen and

Strausmann told 'em what a terror it was to our brave boys in Egypt with its prowlin' 'abits at night, comin' to the camp from the Nile on purpose to seek who it could devour, only six people was left.

After the show was over and Vickery was gettin' the sheet down and packin' up 'is lantern and-ceterer, I was in the private room countin' over the takin's in the presence of Strausmann. Lord! 'ow 'is eyes did glitter as I laid it in piles, and after countin' it again, put it in the leather bag.

'David,' 'e ses with tears in 'is eyes, 'David, dere's no doubt you're a chenius. Dere's no mistake about it, a chenius. You're born to be der great t'eatrical manager, dat's vat you are. Dis is easy monies, undt ve go on der tour all over England; in tvelf mont's ve make der fortunes.'

Just as 'e'd said this, a tap come to the door, and, thinkin' it was Vickery, I called out 'Come in!' and two strong-lookin' men in some sort o' blue uniform entered.

'Count Athos Lafayette de la Fontaine?' asked one of 'em, lookin' at Strausmann.

'Dat vas my name,' 'e said with the dignity of a Dook.

'Mr. David Isaacs, I presoom,' 'e went on, eyein' me none too friendly.

'And you presooms right,' I ses, feelin' very chirpy. 'And what can I do for you?' I asks, with a bit o' condescension in my voice.

'I 'old 'ere,' 'e ses, flourishin' a bit o' blue paper at me, 'a warrant for the arrest of you both for committing a breach of the Defence of the Realm Regulations, Clause 1486d, subsection Q 228.'

'Wot're you talkin' about?' I ses in a loud

voice, but feelin' a bit nervous all the same. 'Ow can a lecture be a breach of any Regulations?' I asks, indignant.

'It ain't the lecture,' 'e ses, quiet, but austere. 'It's the lottery. It ain't for me to argue; I'm 'ere to do my duty.'

'But,' I ses——

'It's my dooty to warn you that anything you say now may be used in evidence against you at the trial. Meantime will yer go quiet or must I use force? Attempt at escape is useless. I 'ave the buildin' surrounded with my men.'

'Come quiet!' I exclaims, feelin' very uncomfortable.

'Ve don't come anyveres,' ses Strausmann. 'I am der French Count——' But before 'e could finish, the other man 'ad whipped 'andcuffs on the pair of us.

'Williams,' ses the orficer to the 'andcuff fiend. 'Take the evidence,' pointin' to the bag and the raffle tickets. 'I'll bring the prisoners.'

The sight of the bag bein' took off was too much for Strausmann.

'Dat vas der daylight robberies!' 'e shouted. 'Dis is vorse dan der fist of der German mails!'

Williams took no notice of 'im and went off with the cash. I kept still, knowin' that to try and argue with an orficer is as useful as tryin' to get into the Bank of England with a toothpick.

When Williams was near the outer door of the buildin' the orficer 'ad seemin'ly forgot to tell 'im somethin', for 'e calls out, 'Oh, Williams!' But gettin' no reply, 'e ran out of the room, sayin' as 'e



went, 'I'll be back in a minute. Don't attempt to move, as my men are armed.'

Then 'e shut the door on us, callin' as 'e went, 'Williams, don't forget to tell 'em at the station——'

But what Williams was to tell 'em I never 'eard, for the outer door shut with a bang, as we sat there feelin' very 'appy, I *don't* think.

'Dis vas a nice t'ing you brought me into, David,' old Strausmann ses, glarin' at me as if I'd arranged it. 'Vy wasn't you content to make der monies only by der lectures, undt not go breakin' der laws?'

I was too knocked to answer the old fool, who a minute ago was callin' me a genius, and now began to turn dog on me; too busy, thinkin' 'ow I could get you to come down to defend us, to bother about the wails o' Strausmann.

'Ow long we sat there, 'andcuffed, I don't know; it may 'ave been five minutes, or it may 'ave been an hour. At last, 'owever, I 'eard steps along the passage and a knock come at the door. I looked up expectin' to see the orficer, but it was only Vickery come to ask 'ow long we was goin' to be.

'We're waiting for the orficer,' I ses.

'What orficer?' 'e asks.

'Im what arrested us,' I ses.

'Arrested!' 'e exclaims, his face goin' whiter and 'is nose redder than ever.

'Yus, arrested!' I answers. 'And if you don't want to enjoy the same treat, you'd better do a mike. Quick,' I ses, givin' 'im a tip, 'im bein' married.

'Was there two of 'em?' 'e ses.

'There was,' I told 'im.

'Why, they went off a quarter of an hour ago,' 'e ses. 'I was waitin' at the door for you when they come out, and as they passed, one says to me: "'They'll be down in a few minutes, and asked me to say you was to wait for 'em 'ere,'" and that's why I didn't come upstairs before. I've been done a long time.'

And then I saw the game."

"Pity you didn't ask to see the warrant, Isaacs," I said. "That would have called their bluff."

"'To think o' me bein' done down by such a simple trick!" he said, biting his lips till the tears sprang to his eyes.

"What did you do about the handcuffs?" I asked.

"'Ad to wait till the mornin' and get the local blacksmith to file 'em off. And what d'you think! On top of all that old Strausmann's threatenin' me that if I don't give 'im back 'is twenty quid, 'e'll tell the whole o' the East End 'ow Isaacs 'ad 'is number took down by two common or garden spielers. Sickenin', I call it!"

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE CONVERSION OF HUNG FO

**I**T was a strange street to which Isaacs, in fulfilment of a long-standing promise, had brought me; a thoroughfare not far from the East India Dock Road, which, owing to its proximity to shipping, had, by degrees, developed into a sort of colony for coloured seamen and Eastern residents.

These sailors, when on shore, used the pavements of this and neighbouring streets as a promenade; they seldom ventured more than a distance of ten minutes' walk from their home, unless to go to the head-office of their particular company in the city, or to the local Police Court, owing to an affray on board.

The lean, turbaned Lascars promenaded the street in irregular, silent progression, and when some chattering Javanese, coming from the opposite direction, passed them, the Lascars evinced so little interest as not even to notice them.

Leaden-skinned Malays, dressed in a variety of incongruous European clothing, stood in a group at the door of their abode, laughing, talking, smoking; idly content with their few hours of freedom.

The only exceptions to the general apathy were the Chinese local residents and shop-keepers, and they, in most cases, were sufficiently busy to give the impression of comparative hurry.

A Seedee "boy," whose skin was as black as the

coal he fed into the furnace of some great liner for a few shillings a month, was sitting on the steps of a house, playing a roughly made harp. As he twanged the three strings successively with his thumb, they gave forth a weird discord, while the "boy" droned a dreary melody, learnt in his far-off sun-scorched Africa.

I stood listening, as he wailed his chant over and over again, without any variation. There was something pathetic in seeing this black, forlorn creature sitting on the damp step of a London house on a chill October day, making—to him—music which he loved, but which, to me, was nothing more than a medley of unpleasant sounds.

As I was thinking of the difference of his present environment to that of his native land, I became conscious that Isaacs was nudging me, and asking fretfully:

"What *are* you lookin' at? Ain't you ever seen a nigger before?"

"I was just thinking," I replied, "that that Seedee 'boy' might be singing in his own tongue, something similar to the dirge chanted by your own people thousands of years ago: 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Zion!' "

He came and stood in front of me, examining me closely, as might a doctor. After studying me a moment, he said:

"Seems to me the air o' this part 'as gone to your 'ead. I must take yer back quick, and 'ave yer looked over by a specialist."

"Why?" I asked. "Don't you recognise the verses?"

He did not reply for a few moments, tracing some line of recollection in his brain. Then he said:

"I may 'ave 'eard 'em; I think I 'ave; but why that nigger should make you go dotty, I *don't* understand."

"Why," I said, trying to make him see the connection, "he may be a victim of the same tragic regret that your people once suffered."

He was up in arms in an instant, offended that his people should be mentioned in the same breath as a nigger.

"'Ere," he said, "don't you compare a nigger to me. We're white, we are, and don't you forget it."

"Of course, you are," I replied. "White in Europe. But not in all parts of the world. In China, you're yellow; the same colour as that boy who has just gone by; in Arabia, you're light brown; in Africa—the centre of Africa—you're as black as that nigger for whom you have such a contempt."

This he would not accept, ignorant of the effect of thousands of years of sun, climate, food, etc.

"Who're yer kiddin'?" he asked. Then with a desire to emphasise his dislike of blacks, he said: "I don't 'ave no truck wiv niggers."

Just then, a party of Lascars came by, walking uneasily in their unaccustomed foot-gear.

"What do you call them, Isaacs?" I asked.

"Niggers," he blurted out. "Just common or garden niggers."

He lumped all people with dark skins under this generic term.

"I won't deal wiv 'em," he went on. "Don't

understand their lingo, for one thing. Besides—they only earn about five bob a month. What's the good o' that to me?"

The disdain and contempt in his voice for people willing to work for such a rate of pay were plainly visible.

"Then, we'll walk on," I said. He was evidently still pondering the question I had raised, for after a few moments, "Now a Chinaman!" he said. "There's a business man for yer. 'E's different; 'e's a trader; buys and sells; 'e's all right, 'e is."

As he spoke, there came hot-foot round the corner, a boy of about ten, who, unable to stop himself, ran full tilt into Isaacs. The lad had the slanting eyes and high cheek-bones of the Celestial, with the tilted nose and the long straight upper lip of the Irish.

The impact brought him and Isaacs to a standstill.

"Hullo, Pat! where're yer awf to in such a hurry?" Isaacs asked, recognising the boy.

"Other shop," said the boy breathlessly. "Go-in' round to tell Lee Sing father wants 'im."

"Is yer father at the grocery?" Isaacs asked.

The boy nodded an affirmative as he stepped aside to continue his journey, while we continued our walk.

"Hung Fo's son, that is," Isaacs vouchsafed. "We're goin' to see 'im. I do a bit o' trade wiv 'im, sometimes, in what they call down 'ere, the 'smoke.' "

"What's that?" I asked.

Isaacs was continually mystifying me with the variety of his business ventures.

"‘Smoke’? Opium. Hung Fo gets through quite a lot at ’is den, and now and then I get a little, cheap, which ’e buys."

"But, where on earth do you get it?" I asked, wondering where the tricks of this necromancer ended.

"Me? Oh, I ’ave a friend—sailor chap. ’E brings it ’ome from——"

He paused, warily; then, with his usual caution, concluded:

"—from foreign parts."

There was no display about Hung Fo’s shop. The window consisted of small panes of glass, too dirty to admit of a clear view of the contents. The articles for sale seemed to have been thrown in anyhow, and there allowed to remain, accumulating dust.

Hung Fo was behind the counter when we entered, studying what looked like a bill of goods. He was dressed European fashion, and wore his pigtail coiled round his head.

"Hullo, Hung," Isaacs said, leaving out the last part of his name with the familiarity of an old acquaintance. "Brought a friend to see yer."

Hung Fo looked up from his papers, and smiled without speaking. Catching Isaacs’ eye, and receiving from it some secret sign, he glided to the back room of the shop, followed by his visitor.

When they returned, Isaacs said:

"Hung’s an old sailor; been ’ere fifteen years, ain’t yer, Hung?" Hung Fo smiled. "Married to an Irish lady, ain’t yer, Hung?" Hung Fo showed the trace of a frown on his forehead.

"Me and ’im’s old friends," Isaacs went on,

"Ever since we got converted. Ain't we, Hung?"

"Welly bad man, Isaac," Hung Fo said enigmatically.

Hung was evidently making a joke into whose mysteries I had not been initiated; he added, to elucidate matters: "'Im and me, Clistians one time."

I asked Isaacs to explain.

"Oh, we always laugh when that comes up, don't we, Hung?" he said, also enjoying the hidden joke.

Hung Fo smiled, nodded, lighted a little pipe which he had filled with some mixture, and sat down contentedly. After about six draws, the contents being exhausted, he laid it down to attend to a young Chinese who entered the shop and asked him for something in the vernacular, and having got what he wanted, went out quietly in his felt-soled boots.

"Give my friend a bit o' your extra special ginger, Hung," Isaacs said. "'E likes ginger, don't yer?" he said, appealing to me as he took a seat on a chest of tea, and pointing to another for me.

Hung Fo got down a pot of ginger, opened it, found some chopsticks under the counter, picked out a piece with them, and passed it to me. I took the sticky mess from the sticks and ate. Isaacs also had a piece, after which, Hung Fo helped himself to a piece and put it in his mouth, chopsticks and all.

I felt sorry I had accepted the invitation and lighted a cigarette hurriedly.

"Tell 'im about the conversion, Hung," Isaacs suggested.

Hung Fo shook his head, saying softly, "You tell. Welly bad Clistian man, you."



Isaacs settled himself in comparative comfort by leaning against the fixture partition behind him, and I, feeling a yarn was coming, did the same.

“When Hung Fo come ’ere first, and opened this shop, ’e was pounced on by every missionary for about a ’underd and forty miles round. The first one who called, asked ’im if ’e was a Christian——”

“Me Shinto,” Hung Fo interrupted.

Isaacs took no notice and continued:

“—And when Hung said ’e wasn’t, the missionary say ’e must be, or else things’d be very bad for ’im later on. I don’t know what was to ’appen to ’im, but frizzlin’ and fryin’, roastin’ and grillin’, was a part of ’em. The Chinese torments ’e’s told me about wasn’t in it with what they’d arranged for ’im, if ’e didn’t take on wiv their particular brand of religion.

Hung, o’ course, not speakin’ English very well, didn’t understand ’alf o’ what was said to ’im, so accordin’ to custom, ’e just smiled. Which pleased the missionaries fine.

They all left books for ’im to read. They was to do ’im a power o’ good, and no doubt they would if ’e could ’ave read ’em, but as ’e couldn’t, ’e just put ’em in a drawer to wrop up pennorth’s o’ sugar and such like.

Altogether ’e ’ad six different kinds o’ Christians comin’ round botherin’ ’is life out to join their churches and chapels, and ’e was gettin’ fed up over it when I ’appened to be there as one of ’em called. A kind-lookin’ old sort wiv a broad-brimmed, black ’at and a white tie.

‘Good mornin’,’ ’e ses, ‘is Mr. Hung Fo within?’

## CONVERSION OF HUNG FO 251

'Mr. Hung's very busy this mornin', I ses, and makin' believe I didn't know what 'e'd come about, I asked 'im what 'e wanted.

He said 'e belonged to the East End Mission for the rekkelermination of 'eretics.

'What's a 'eretic?' I asks, not exactly catchin' 'is meanin', like.

'Why, Jews and Chinamen . . . like 'im,' 'e ses, pointin' to Hung, who'd come in while we was talkin'.

'Why, I'm a Jew,' I ses.

'Then you're a 'eretic, and we pray for yer every Sunday at my church,' 'e ses, lookin' at me like as if I was a naughty boy.

'Well,' I ses, 'it ain't done much good so far, but that's p'raps because I'm starvin', and prayin' for people wiv empty stomachs ain't likely to, is it?' I ses, touchin' the spot.

'No, indeed,' 'e ses, sympathetic like. After thinkin' a moment or two, 'e asks, 'Ow is it you're starvin'?

'Out o' work,' I ses. 'E's starvin' too,' I ses, pointin' to Hung. 'No customers; can't pay the rent; prays every night to one of 'is assorted gawds 'e keeps on the shelf in 'is sittin'-room, but they don't do any good, so 'e's thinkin' serious of changin' 'is religion.'

'Is 'e?' the chap asks, eager as a gal for a new 'at.

'So am I,' I ses, not wantin' to be left out of anything good what might be goin'. 'Only,' I ses, 'I must get some money for food, else I can't think of it.'

'E stands there for at least a minute wivout

sayin' a word, thinkin' somethink out. At last 'e ses:

'My society 'as got funds to 'elp them in distress. I'll see what I can do.' And 'e makes as if 'e was goin'.

'When will yer be back?' I asks, so's I could be there when he came.

'The day after to-morrow,' 'e ses, 'about twelve o'clock,' and as 'e went, I could 'ear 'im mutterin', 'The poor 'eathen, they must be fed.'

'Fed and clothed,' I calls after 'im, to give 'im a 'int.

Next time 'e came, I was dressed in a suit o' clothes I'd be ashamed to sell to a rag-and-bottle man. 'E come in quite chirpy, but looked very sad when 'e saw poor Hung sittin' at the counter, like 'e is now, only wiv 'is 'ead buried in 'is arms.

'What's the matter wiv 'im?' 'e asks, in a anxious tone o' voice.

'Landlord says unless the rent is paid to-morrow—two quarters—'e'll come in and take possession,' I ses, 'alf cryin'.

'Oh, my gracious,' 'e ses, that bein' as near as 'e could get to swearin'; 'ow dreadful. 'Ow much is it?'

'Twenty-five pound,' I answers, watchin' to see 'ow 'e'd take it. 'And if 'e can't pay it, 'e's goin' to commit suicide, and I'm goin' to as well,' I ses, not wantin' to be out of it if it come awf.

'Dear, oh dear,' 'e ses, swearin' again, and almost 'eart broken. 'And I've only got five pounds from the society, thinkin' that would be ample.'

'It'll do to pay the gas bill and get a bit o' food,' I ses, puttin' out my 'and.

'E parted up all right, and when I'd got it safe in my pocket, I turns to Hung: 'Cheer up, Hung, ole chap. The gent's given me the money for the gas and water, and is now goin' back at once to get twenty-five pounds for the rent. When that's paid, we'll be able to think a bit about religion, same as what you said to me the other day.'

Hung looked up and give the same kind o' smile a man does who's 'eard that 'is rich uncle's dead and 'as left 'im ten pounds to buy a ring to remember 'im by, when 'e was expectin' ten thousand. Then I ses to the missionary:

'I'm much obliged on behalf o' my friend and myself. Please don't wait a moment, but go and get the rent money, so as we shall be able to sleep to-night.'

'I don't think I can manage that,' 'e ses, walkin' up and down the shop very agitated.

'It don't matter, then,' I ses, resigned like, as I walks round the counter, and layin' my 'and affectionate like on Hung's shoulder. ''Ave yer got the prussic acid, Hung?' I ses.

Wivout lookin' up, Hung nodded 'is 'ead.

'Then we'll die to-morrow,' I ses, tragic, like an actor. 'Two 'eretics together. We'll frizzle and burn for ever, for the sake of a paltry twenty-five quid.' And I looked at the missionary as if by this time to-morrow 'e'd be a murderer.

The thought of such an 'orrible punishment for somethink we 'adn't done, I could see, upset 'im terrible. After a little while, 'e ses:

'I'll make an effort, I promise you. I only 'ope I can find the secretary who signs the cheques.'

'Unt 'ard for 'im,' I ses, givin' 'im instruc-

tions. 'Don't leave a stone unturned, if yer don't want to find two corpses at twelve o'clock.' And I sat down, overcome wiv my feelin's, and begun to sob as if my 'eart would break.

When I looked up, the man was gone, so I didn't trouble to get my 'andkerchief to wipe the tears away; instead, I give old Hung a poke in the ribs, sayin':

'Get up, you 'eretic, and change this fiver, keep 'alf, and give me a cigarette,' bustin' for a smoke through not darin' to light up while the missionary was in the shop.

And all Hung did was to smile as usual, pass me a packet of 'is disinfectors, and say: 'You welly bad Clistian man.' Didn't yer, Hung?'

Talking of cigarettes reminded Isaacs that he wasn't smoking; he took one loose from his pocket, put in the yellow stained tube he always carried, and remained silent for a minute.

Hung looked at me, then at Isaacs, and delivered himself of the oracular expression: "Welly bad Clistian man; he fly when 'im dead."

Having had a few draws at his cigarette, Isaacs continued:

"Next day the missionary turned up at eleven sharp, as excited as a man 'urrying' to a pub, 'avin' found 'alf-a-crown in the linin' of 'is coat.

Seein' on the counter two glasses and a pint bottle labelled 'prussic acid,' 'e ses: 'Put away that awful stuff! I've got the money! Put it away!' And 'e makes a grab at the bottle, runs to the shop door, and breaks it on the pavement.

Hung and me was sittin' behind the counter, lookin' the picture of despair. When I 'eard the

missionary say 'e'd got the cash, I put my arms round Hung's neck, and nearly—not quite—kissed 'im.

'We're saved, Hung!' I shouts at 'im, and 'e looked up and smiled. I believe 'e'd smile if 'e was told 'e was to be shot at dawn on a nasty cold mornin'. I do, 'pon my sam.

'Where's the money?' I asks, in a weak tone, as if nothin' mattered after the night we'd gone through.

'Ere, in my pocket,' 'e ses.

I put out my 'and for it.

'I'm to pay the landlord when 'e comes, and take a receipt. So I'll wait for 'im,' 'e ses. Then 'e goes on joyfully: 'Won't 'e get a surprise?' 'e asks me, and adds: 'No doubt the 'ard-'earted wretch thinks 'e's goin' to turn you out of your shop, eh?'

'No doubt,' I ses in a mechanical way, puzzlin' my brains as to what to do after the shock 'e'd give me in not 'andin' over the cash.

But Hung come to the rescue fine. 'E looked at the missionary, and ses, 'Landlo' no comee to-day. Come to-morrow. . . .'

'When did you 'ear that?' I asks, pretendin' to be wild wiv 'im for not tellin' me. 'And me gettin' the poison ready, to drink myself to death!' I ses, nettled.

Hung looks at me and ses: 'Messenger boy come while you out tlyin' to bollow money.'

'Oh,' I ses, reproachful, 'you ought to 'ave told me, and not let me get the poison ready. What time is 'e comin'?''

'Allee sam time; 'leben o'clock,' ses Hung.

'Then I must come back to-morrow,' ses the missionary.

'You won't fail?' I ses, not likin' at all 'im goin' awf wiv our money.

'I shall be 'ere, my poor friend, wivout doubt,' 'e ses. 'And, mind,' 'e ses, lookin' at me over 'is specs, 'no poison. You promise?'

'Faithful,' I ses.

And awf 'e goes as 'appy as if I'd give 'im five and twenty, instead of 'im 'avin' to part it over for us.

After 'e'd gone, Hung goes into the little room at the back o' the shop, and does a bit o' prayin' to one of 'is assorted idols, and when 'e comes back, 'e ses: 'You go find landlo.'

I guessed that was the idea, and goes awf quick to my old man, and when I told 'im about it, 'e gave me several 'ints as to 'ow to make more out of the missionary, 'cause 'e said it was wicked for them to try to make a Jew change 'is religion.

'E rolled up next mornin' dressed in 'is best togs and a silk 'at which 'e's 'ad to my knowledge for at least fifteen years, 'avin' stood across the road till 'e saw the missionary come into the shop.

'Vell,' 'e ses, lookin' severe at Hung, 'ave you got der rents, or am I der brokers to put in?'

Hung sat still, sayin' nothin'. I looked at the missionary who come forward, puttin' 'is 'and in 'is pocket and pullin' out three nice new notes; two tenners and a fiver.

'There's your rent, sir, and I'll ask you for a receipt,' 'e ses very short, as if 'e didn't want any truck wiv such a 'ard-'earted man.

'Goot,' ses my father, pickin' up the notes, and

askin' Hung for a sheet o' paper and pen and ink. Knowin' the old man wasn't too good at writin', I made out the account and passed it over for 'im to sign 'is name.

'It requires a stamp,' ses the missionary, examin' it to see it was all O.K. No one 'avin' one, I darted round to the post orfice in a jiffy, and brought one back, and 'ad it put on, proper.

The missionary 'avin' pocketed the receipt, looks at my father as much as to say 'is room was preferred to 'is company; givin' 'im what yer may call the gloomy eye, which my old man spottin', 'e went awf, leavin' us alone.'

Then the missionary told us 'ow glad 'e was to 'ave saved us from ruin, and that if ever we was in 'sore straits' as 'e called it, not to 'esitate to let 'im know, 'cause there was a special fund provided by some rich old ladies for 'eretics like us, who they wanted to save from 'ell.

Of course, we promised all sorts o' things about 'is religion, and from time to time, naturally we got 'ard up, and 'ad a bit out of 'im; in fact, all was goin' fine till Mrs. Hung—'er you saw a few minutes ago—spoilt everythink.

I 'ad just got a scheme ready to bring a 'underd starvin' Chinamen to be made Christians of; only before they'd come they 'ad to 'ave their bellies well filled. That'd cost, say, two quid a man; two 'underd pounds. I was to be the treasurer, naturally. When they was well filled by a week's good grub, I was to take 'em in a bunch to a 'all where 'e was to talk to 'em about things they couldn't understand, not if 'e spoke to 'em for a year right awf.



The nice old man rather cottoned on to the idea, and the game was workin' out as I wanted, when one mornin', just as the missionary popped in, and we was talkin' over the details, in walked Mrs. Hung.

She looked at the missionary, and then at me.

'What divilment's goin' on 'ere?' she asks, starin' at us all one after the other, as if she'd shoot the lot of us for tuppence.

The missionary, not graspin' the unfortunate situation, asked 'er who she was. This made 'er rortzed (angry), and lookin' at 'im clean in the middle of 'is eyes, she said in a loud tone: 'Who am I? Faith an' that's a nice question to put to the lawful wedded wife o' that yellow-faced Chow who sits there lookin' like one of 'is own 'eathen images. That's who I am.' Then gettin' a bit nearer to 'im, she goes on, 'And now, I'd ask ye to tell me who the divil you may be!'

The missionary, I could see, was a bit afraid of 'er, and in a very meek and mild voice, ses:

'I'm the district visitor, madam, of the East End Protestant Mission for the reclamation. . . .'

He was never able to finish what 'e was goin' to say.

'Protestant!' she shrieks at 'im, flarin' up like a fire in a 'igh wind. 'Protestant! Has it come to this, by all the Saints! Here am I the wife of an uncivilised Chow who's friends wiv a sallow-faced Jew, who's no good to 'im or to any one else. Now, as if that wasn't enough to drive a woman mad, I 'ave to deal wiv a Protestant, begob! Me, a Catholic, trained in a convent. By Hivens, it's more than flesh and blood can stand!'

She gets closer still to the poor little man, and ses, threatenin' like: 'Get out o' this! Get out at once. And, I warn ye, if ever I see yer ugly mug inside my shop again, as sure as me maiden name was Norah O'Callaghan—shame on me for changin' it to 'Hung Fo'—I'll belt ye 'ard over the 'ead wiv a tin o' dog's biscuits. I will, begob!'

She took 'im by the shoulders and shoved 'im into the street as easy as pickin—as pickin' yer teeth, and spoilin' as nice a piece o' business as any respectable merchant could want to 'andle.

My old man played the dirty on me, too. 'E charged me a fiver for doin' the job. Said 'e'd a-done it for two pound ten, only 'is religious feelin's 'ad been 'urt by doin' wiv a Protestant."

"And what became of all the other ministers who called on Hung Fo?" I asked.

"Oh, them," Isaacs answered with withering contempt. "They wasn't any good at all, from a cash point o' view. I put 'em in competition one wiv the other by gettin' 'em round 'ere in a bunch one mornin'. They was very surprised to see each other, each thinkin' 'e was the chosen one to convert us. I pitched 'em the yarn about empty tummies, and not bein' able to think of religion when you're starvin', but they wouldn't spring a bean, not one of 'em. So to finish 'em awf, I ses: 'If religion won't go so far as to save us from starvation, I don't think it's any good; that's my opinion.' Then I turns to Hung, and asks 'im what 'e thinks about it."

Isaacs turned to Hung Fo, laughing quite heartily for him.

"Tell 'im what you said to the blighters, Hung."

Hung turned to me in his calm impassive manner and spoke in an even tone without the slightest inflexion.

"I say to them," he said, "Clistian velly fine leligion, allee same Shinto leligion. You Clistian," he pointed his finger at an imaginary person, "you Clistian," he moved his finger to the right, "you Clistian—you Clistian—you Clistian—all Clistian. Me, Shinto. Shinto only one leligion; Clistian," he counted on his fingers, "one, two, tlee, fo', fi', sik leligions. Me no understand. You go 'ome, makee sik leligions one leligion, and we talkee alla samee more, and I makee me Clistian, myself, p'laps. Me Shinto, now. Get out, you — fools!"

Isaacs shook with silent laughter while this recital was going on, while Hung Fo looked at me and smiled.

"Don't 'e talk funny?" Isaacs asked. Then he went on:

"You should 'ave seen 'em clear out. And as they went, they looked at us as if we was ever so much worse than ordinary 'eretics; they stared at us as if we was wild animals let loose from a cage, gettin' ready to spring at 'em. And they did one of the quickest guys I've ever seen, and I've seen a few, take my word for it."

On the way home to the city, Isaacs, who had been silent a long while, asked me: "For a common 'eretic, tell me, do you think Hung was far out in what 'e said?"

Not wishing to make a confession on the weaknesses of my own faith, I left his question unanswered.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A TRAM ACCIDENT

“**D**EAR SIR,—  
Will you be so kind as to come and  
see me, being laid up very ill in the  
Surrey Hospital,

Yours truly,

D. ISAACS.”

As I put down the ill-written note Isaacs had sent me, I could not help thinking it rather vague. “Very ill,” it said, but no mention was made of the complaint nor did he say why he wished to see me. However, I decided to go at once.

Some difficulty was raised about my admission as it was not visitors’ day, but I overcame it by using the plea that I was the patient’s solicitor.

I expected to see Isaacs looking pale and ill, and I was glad to find no appreciable difference in his appearance.

When the nurse brought me to his bed-side, she said, “A gentleman to see you, Mr. Isaacs,” and stood there waiting for him to make a reply of some sort; instead, he scrutinised me for a time, and then asked in a weak voice:

“What’s yer name?”

I told him he ought to know by this time, and laughed.

“How are you?” I asked, adding, how sorry I was to see him there. He ignored the remark.

“What’s yer business?” And without waiting

for an answer, he continued: "I don't want a lot o' strangers come botherin' about me, understand."

Seeing I had come at his express wish, I was commencing to feel annoyed, but the nurse, noticing my predicament, explained the trouble.

"Mr. Isaacs has been in an accident," she said, "and has suffered a shock to his nerves, with occasional loss of memory."

In a moment my annoyance disappeared. I was genuinely concerned, knowing as I did that his physique was none too robust.

"My dear chap," I said, "I'm awfully sorry——"

He interrupted me before I could finish what I was going to say.

"Who are yer?" he asked loudly, his voice showing signs of temper.

"You must be careful not to upset him," the nurse warned me, "or I shall have to ask you to leave the patient."

"I'm awfully sorry, nurse," I replied in a propitiatory tone. Then to explain my presence, I brought out his letter which I showed her. "You see, I've really come in answer to that," I said. "How long has he been here?"

"Two days," the nurse said. "And the doctors don't quite understand the case yet," she added, looking at Isaacs sympathetically.

I promised to be very gentle. Just as the nurse was leaving, I was startled to hear him cry out: "Oh, Oo-oo! There's that 'orrible pain again, nurse. . . ."

"Where is it this time?" she asked with that

gentleness which seems to be the special attribute of nurses.

"Just between the 'ip joint and the knee; right in the middle o' the leg where yer can't get at it to rub," he said. After turning over he asked plaintively: "Couldn't I 'ave a little more o' that medicine, nurse? It seems to soothe the pain a bit."

She looked at the clock at the far end of the ward.

"I think you might, though it's rather before time; but the ammonia and arsenic——"

"Oh, not that I don't mean, nurse. I couldn't take any o' that while I'm sufferin' so. It's the other . . .," he pleaded.

"Oh, the port wine," she commenced, but he interrupted her before she could finish her remark.

"That's it, nurse, that's it. I feel it'd strengthen me up a bit." He stopped to writhe in pain. "Oh, there's the awful pain again! What shall I do! What shall I do!"

It was pitiful to see the poor fellow, and I felt very helpless in my inability to alleviate his sufferings.

"I'm afraid you mustn't have port," the nurse said. "It's much too sweet——"

"It's the only thing that touches the spot," he argued, still hoping to persuade her. She was firm, however, in her refusal.

"You're on low diet for a few days," she said. "Port is much too stimulating for what you are being treated."

"What's the name of the complaint?" he asked, as if anxious to be informed.

"I don't know; you must ask the doctor when he comes," she replied.

"Tell 'im to put me on port, turkey and oysters, nurse," he suggested in a weak voice. "I know what suits me, yer know. All them are good. When a patient fancies a thing, it's bound to 'elp 'is case." Then looking at me as if I were a perfect stranger, he asked, roughly: "Well, what are *you* waitin' for? You ain't another doctor, are yer?"

"No," I answered gently. "I'm only a lawyer."

"Lawyer!" he almost shouted. "I 'ate lawyers! I don't think I could squeegee a tear out if every lawyer was killed to-morrow. Oh! what agony I'm sufferin'!" he said, as he moved from side to side as if in an endeavour to obtain relief. "Can't yer do somethink, nurse? Somethink in the nature of a cigarette, now; that might 'elp."

The nurse's mouth looked very grim and determined.

"You needn't look forward to a smoke for at least a month," she answered—a little coldly, I thought. "At least, that is what the doctor says."

"A month!" he exclaimed, forgetting his pains as he sat up in bed. Then, falling back as if exhausted, he wailed: "What wiv pains in the legs and shocks to the nerves, and loss o' memory and no port wine—like I 'ad when I was first brought 'ere, it's more than flesh and blood can stand. And now yer cap the lot by sayin' 'no cigarettes.' It's——"

Words failed him as he looked at me with despair in his eyes. He went on to bemoan his fate in a spirit of calm resignation: "Oh, well, it don't matter. I don't suppose I'm long for this world, anyway. Only it does seem 'ard for a poor invalid

who's soon to be in 'is grave, that 'e shouldn't be treated wiv a little more consideration. What's a cigarette?" he pleaded. "One, now and again, if it soothes 'is agony? Or a glass o' port, if it'll make 'im a bit stronger?"

He looked at the nurse while he was speaking, but she was deaf to his supplications.

He continued: "As for what they call 'low diet,' which is weak tea in the mornin', milk and water at mid-day, tea in the afternoon, and water at supper time—all I can say is, it'll shorten my days."

"You don't give me the idea of being so weak, I'm glad to say," I said, trying to buoy him up a little.

He turned in the bed and glared at me.

"What d'you know about my case?" he asked savagely. "You ain't a doctor, are yer? I 'eard the doctor tell 'er" (he pointed to the nurse)—"I 'eard 'im tell 'er distinct, the first day they brought me 'ere, I was to be fed up. And now, after they've examined me, they don't give me as much food as would satisfy an old poll-parrot. It's scandalous, I call it. I shan't subscribe to no more 'orspitals if this is 'ow my money's spent; I shan't, I tell yer, straight."

And he lay back looking at the ceiling as though seeking from the cold whitewash some inspiration by which he could alleviate his troubles.

As the nurse was moving away to attend to another patient, I followed her, asking the cause of his illness.

"He was in that tram accident the other night down the Barking Road, when two cars collided



and one got overturned," she informed me. "There were several cases brought here; some bruised and shaken—a few days will put them right, though; one had a broken arm. Your friend seems to be the most serious of them, judging by his symptoms."

"Loss of memory is indeed serious," I said. "Especially if it's likely to be permanent. It renders a man absolutely incapable of following his business, doesn't it?"

"Oh, I don't think he's as bad as all that," she replied with a certain amount of confidence in her voice. "However, we shall know more soon; another day or so will determine it. Excuse me now, please, I must go to another patient; I've spent rather too much time with your friend already."

And she left me to look after others who needed her services.

I returned to Isaacs who was still in the same position as when I left him, his eyes on the ceiling. He ignored my presence, so I sat a little while reflecting on the unfortunate accident that had overtaken him, wondering why he had, in a lucid moment, sent for me, and hoping his brain would clear sufficiently for him to tell me. As he displayed no sign of improvement, I rose to go, feeling that in his present condition, it were useless to remain.

My rising disturbed him; he brought his eyes to bear upon me, shifted his position slightly, and after looking at me a moment or two, he said:

"'Ullo, 'ow long 'ave you been 'ere?"

Not wishing to risk disturbing his disordered

brain, I replied, "Not long; a few minutes only."

He lay still a short time, then seeming to realise that he was ill and in a hospital bed, he looked at me wearily.

"Ain't this a terrible business?" he asked. "'Ere am I, wiv a lot o' things on 'and; good profitable ones too; all thrown overboard owin' to this accident." He meditated upon his misfortune for a little while. "When I think of the money I shall lose——"

"Don't think about it," I interrupted him. "Thinking won't do the slightest good, and will only retard matters."

"That's all very well for you to talk like that!" he said, rather irritably. "I'll lay you've 'ad a good breakfast of bacon and eggs, very likely; you'll 'ave a bit o' roast beef and semolina pudden to follow for lunch, p'raps; and to-night—oh Lord!—the very thought of what you're goin' to eat makes me feel I'd be a cannibal for tuppence, I'm so empty." And he glared at the man in the next bed who was enjoying some lightly boiled eggs and hot coffee. My eyes followed his with sympathy, as he watched with envy every mouthful the man was eating.

"Evidently the doctors think a low diet necessary," I said, to soothe him, "and if it means a speedier recovery——"

"Damn the low diet, I say," he burst in with remarkable energy for so sick a man. "I've always 'eard that patients in 'orspitals live on the fat o' the land, and when they started me on port wine, I begun to believe it, and was glad I'd let 'em bring me 'ere."

"You *were* conscious then, when they picked you up?" I said, glad that the shock of the collision had not completely stunned him.

"Partly," he answered. "First I was, and then I wasn't, like. The port wine 'elped me a lot when I was put to bed. But they've only give me one glass," he complained. Continuing to recount his grievances, he went on: "As for that ammonia stuff they pour into me, after I've got over the sick feelin', it makes me so 'ungry I could eat one o' them beastly German sausages what's made o' Gawd knows what! And when I ask for a tasty beef steak, they bring me a cup of 'alf cold tea, wiv a bit o' stale bread scraped wiv marjarine, which tastes like the grease smells they use on the rail-ways."

"Never mind," I said consolingly. "They know best, you may be sure. And, after all, it's only for a month, with luck."

"A month!" he exclaimed, sitting up again. "D'you think I can stand this for a month! Why, I'd rather walk about on my 'ands and knees than lay 'ere for four weeks! Yes," he said emphatically, "not only that! Rather than stay 'ere that time, I'd give up my claim against the Tram Company——" He corrected himself. "No, I don't mean that, o' course. They've got to pay,—and pay 'eavy, too, I promise yer," he said fiercely.

Fearing that he was unduly exciting himself, I told him I really could not sit there and allow him to bother his head about business, or claims for damages; that could wait and be discussed when he was sufficiently well. He took no notice of my observations, but went on making audible calcula-

tions of his losses, and the compensation he would demand.

"There's loss o' business through missin' buyin' a job line o' cigars—that's worth a 'underd at least; there's commission I was to get from Abe Saunders the money-lender, for interdoocin' a client—that ought to be worth fifty; there's promisin' to go 'alves wiv Ike Abramovitch in a parcel o' Birmingham cutlery which we was goin' to sell by mock auction—the rivach on that would 'ave panned out at least fifty." Then, after a few seconds' cogitation, he added: "Oh, there's lots more, but most of all, there's damages to 'ealth and 'appiness, loss of appetite—no, not that, 'cause it ain't true; there's not being able to go about my business like I used to—p'raps for years. If I let 'em awf for a thousand . . . no, that's too cheap—say, two," he said after a moment's reflection, "and they'll be gettin' awf cheap. Besides, they always cut yer down in them beastly courts. Altogether," he concluded, "it ought to tot up to somewhere in the neighbourhood of two thousand four 'underd quidlets." He looked to me for confirmation, and asked, "Not so bad, eh?"

"Excellent," I replied, not wishing to throw him off his balance by the least suggestion of difficulties which might be encountered when it came to proof.

"All that's your job," he said, "and you'd better go away and work it out from what I've give yer as a starter."

I agreed.

As I was leaving the ward, I met the nurse at the door who asked me how I had left him.

"Oh, he recognised me at last, I'm glad to say," I replied. "He seemed more like himself, being able to converse rationally. He complains about the quantity of food he's getting," I added, thinking, perhaps, a word from an independent person might have some effect. An absurd idea, no doubt.

"That's a good sign," she replied. "Low diet for brain affections is absolutely necessary; most essential the brain should be kept cool, you see."

"Well, I hope the next time I visit him, I shall find him much improved," I said, as I took my leave.

"I hope so," she said, smiling. "In fact, with still less food, I can't help thinking his recovery will be, comparatively, rapid. But you never can tell; we must hope for the best."

"I hope I haven't stayed too long," I remarked, as I had been with him a considerable time.

"I don't think so," she replied. "We encourage conversation in cases like his." Her reply relieved me, as it occurred to me I might have done him harm by permitting him to talk so much.

To my intense surprise Isaacs turned up at my office three days later. He limped to a seat with the aid of two sticks, and as he sat down, he did so as if one of his legs was stiff.

"Lord! Ain't it good to 'ave a smoke again," he said, as he puffed away contentedly and inhaled the smoke, enjoying it too much to talk for a while. Having finished the cigarette, he looked at me and smiled.

"I'm most surprised to see you here!" I exclaimed. "I understood you wouldn't be well enough to leave the hospital for a month. How——"

"Left yesterday afternoon," he said concisely. "And glad of it. A week more o' the swipes they was feedin' me on, I'd 'ave been too weak to take any action against the Tram Company. Got a fine idea after you left, about them——"

"For a sick man, Isaacs, a man who loses his memory spasmodically, you're remarkably spry, mentally," I interrupted.

"So I went deaf, sudden. Couldn't 'ear a word the nurse ses to me. When I saw 'er talkin', all I could do was to put my 'and to my ear, and shout, 'Eh?' "

"But why on earth did you do that?" I asked, thinking the poor chap had enough real troubles without adding any artificial complaints. "You only make her work harder, without any benefit to yourself——"

"No benefit!" he blurted. "Ain't it! I'm goin' for another five 'underd for it. Yes, I am. 'Specially after what the doctor said yesterday afternoon."

He rose from his chair, picking up his sticks from the floor, and hobbled about the room for a minute; then he resumed his seat as if tired.

"Can't walk about much; too tryin'; 'ave to take taxis for which the bloomin' Tram Company'll 'ave to pay."

"What did the doctor say to you?" I asked, anxious to hear and not understanding why he had been allowed to leave the hospital so quickly.

"Oh, we 'ad a regular performance yesterday afternoon, me and the doctor bein' the 'stars,' the 'orspital students bein' the audience. 'E made a regular speech about me. Told 'em I was the

worst case of a man sufferin' from—from—— I've forgot the word." He thought a minute trying to recall it. "Never mind, it'll come to me presently. 'Ere,' 'e ses, lookin' at me as if I was a livin' wonder, 'ere 'e is, sufferin' from loss o' memory—terrible loss o' memory; all 'e can remember is port wine and cigarettes! Added to this,' 'e ses, 'is complaint is aggravated wiv all the symptoms of sciatica; though 'ow sciatica could possibly arise from the awful collision, I don't know. It is a mystery to me.' That's what 'e ses," Isaacs repeated, "a mystery! Then 'e goes on, 'And now a further complication 'as set in—'e 'as suddenly gone deaf; can't 'ear a word. I'll prove it to yer.'

'E turns to me, and ses, 'Can you 'ear me?' shoutin' as if I was in the next street. I put my 'and to my ear as usual, and ses, 'Eh?'

'There, you see,' 'e ses, addressin' the students who was laughin'—though what at, I don't know now—it's as I said, 'e's as deaf as a post.' They all stared at me as if I was a leadin' actor walkin' down Regent Street. Then 'e starts again: 'And now, gents, in conclusion, I'm goin' to prove to yer what a genuine——'" Isaacs paused in his recital. "'E said 'genuine' mind yer, and ses it very emphatic, too." Then he took up his story where he had broken off: "'What a genuine case o' somethink or the other, this man is.' Then 'e told 'em to make a gangway for me to pass through 'em. When they'd formed up in two lines, he looked at me, and then at the door, meanin' I could clear out. As I passed the students, I inspected 'em same as a General does the troops, 'aughty like.

Just as I got to the door, I 'eard a coin drop on

the floor be'ind me, so I looked round, thinkin' it might be mine.

'Come back!' the doctor calls to me, so I turned round and walked up to 'im. 'I'm glad you've got yer 'earin' back,' 'e ses, smilin' at me.

'It comes and goes sudden like,' I ses, seein' I'd made a bloomer about the 'alf-crown on the floor.

'It's fortunate it comes when money's dropped be'ind yer,' 'e ses, 'else yer might lose quite a lot.' Then 'e ses to the students, 'It's funny that no matter 'ow deaf this type o' man is, that trick always brings 'is 'earin' back at once.' Then the students laughed again; why, I don't know, as I said before.

I was beginnin' to feel very fed up about all this deaf talk, when 'e turns to me and ses, 'And now, my young friend, I think you may dress yourself and take your departure. At once!' 'e ses, turnin' nasty, eyein' me as if 'e was goin' to bite me. 'You may go,' 'e ses, addin' as a round awf to 'is speech, 'and I 'ope your other complaints'll cure themselves as quick as that 'alf-crown did your deafness. Make way for the malingerer,' 'e ses——"

"Maligner!" I exclaimed loudly. "Is that \_\_\_\_\_,"

"That's what 'e said my complaint was," Isaacs said, "and the worst case 'e'd ever seen. Don't forget that, when we get 'im in the witness box against the Tram Company." And he looked at me triumphantly.

"Isaacs," I said, with cold severity, "do you know the meaning of the word?"



As if it were a disease he answered, "No, I don't. Why? Is it very bad?"

"Very," I replied, as I went to a bookcase and took down a dictionary. Finding the word I pointed it out to him as I handed him the volume. He stared at it a moment, looked up at me behind his chair, and muttered, "Good Lord! And I thought I was spoofin' 'em fine!"

And with that remark, he rose from his seat without the aid of his sticks, and as he walked to the door, he looked at me as if I had insulted him.

## CHAPTER XIX

### A DEAL IN ARMY BOOTS

**R**ETURNING to my office along the Commercial Road one cold morning, my attention was attracted to a queue of women and children waiting outside a shop which sold, among other things, butter and margarine.

I stood watching the long, patient line for a minute, and was on the point of resuming my journey, when I saw Isaacs coming across the road.

From his mouth he removed a long discoloured bone holder containing the eternal "lung slayer."

"Out for a stroll to get a little fresh air?" he asked.

The words "good morning" had no place in his vocabulary.

"Good morning, Isaacs," I said, from force of habit. "No, I'm not strolling; I'm walking back to my office."

"Don't like them queues," he said, nodding his head backwards towards the shop we had now passed.

"Nor do I," I said. "It's unpleasant, to say the least, seeing those women standing there on the off chance of being able to buy some food; and the children with pinched faces, too little clothing, and hands blue with the cold! It's distressing."

Isaacs regarded me with an expression of surprise. He was not accustomed to what may be

called my human side. He knew me only as a solicitor, curt of speech and soulless, with a brain keen for facts.

Dismissing the momentary impression I had made on him, he said:

"Yes, it's 'ard on the women, and 'arder on the kids. They, at any rate, ought to get their share of all the grub what's goin'. It oughtn't to be like what it was when war was begun. Then you should a-seen the Yiddisher women rushin' the shops for food. Any sort. 'Only give me any kind you've got. Never mind my neighbours starvin',' was their cry. I believe some of 'em was so funky they'd 'ave to go short, they'd 'ave bought pigs' trotters if they'd seen 'em on the butchers' stalls.

One grocer down this road—'e 'as a branch shop at 'Ampstead to supply the Yids who 'ave shifted there from this part o' London—told me they cleared 'im out of *everything* 'e 'ad. All 'e'd got left was a few bladders o' lard. Lard bein' trifer (forbidden), yer know."

"You surprise me," I exclaimed.

"Oh, do I?" he answered, regarding me with a curious stare. "Don't you know us Jews love our tummies almost more'n *anythink*? Ain't you noticed 'ow most of us run to fat when we get over the thirties? *And* when we've jumped into the forties, there ain't any need to run; we've caught it all right. By that time, runnin' ain't the question—we find it 'ard enough to walk.

Ain't you seen our ladies at the the-ay-ters? In evenin' togs? That ought to tell yer all yer want to know. Oh, yes, they like to feed 'emselves, take it from me, and knowin' this, when the food

shortage set in, I thought I might do some o' them food 'oggers a turn, me always thinkin', as you know, 'ow I can 'elp anybody, so long as I don't do myself any 'arm."

"At a price," I said, laughing.

"Well, tradin' must show a profit, else it ain't any good bein' in business," he replied, with perfect logic. Then he continued: "S'pose you wanted a bit o' beef very bad——"

"I shouldn't come to you for it, I assure you," I answered, quite candidly.

"Why not?" he asked, in a wounded tone.

"I should be afraid of getting hoarse," I replied frankly. "I am acquainted with your methods, you see, Isaacs."

He laughed as if I had paid him a compliment.

"Ah," he said, "I've let you see behind the scenes too much," he commented. Then coming back to his subject as if I had not interrupted him, he went on:

"As I was sayin', I thought them food 'oggers might be done a good turn to, and my mind tumbled on to tea. 'Everybody likes tea,' I ses to myself. The princess takes it at four o'clock wiv a jam sangwich, or mustard and cress, or a bit o' cake. *You* like it, 'cause I've caught yer drinkin' it in yer orfice. The washerwoman loves it at any time o' the day or night; so does the factory gal, and the shop assistant. 'Tea,' I ses, 'is the staff o' life, and I must do a deal in it, or bust.'

So 'avin' arranged everythink in my mind, I goes off to see a proper old food 'ogger by the name o' Steinervitz, a wholesale cigar maker; 'is 'Flor der Artichokes' at five a bob are a popular brand in the district.

'Tea's gettin' scarcer and scarcer,' I ses, after a talk on the food question in general.

'You're right, David,' 'e ses, 'my wife's in a dreadful way over not bein' able to get any. As for the factory 'ands, I'm at my wits' end, 'cause I've always give it 'em; they work so much better for it. It's funny you should mention it; I was just wonderin' what I'm to do.'

This was right into my 'and; couldn't be better for what I wanted.' Isaacs smiled as if conscious that Providence was working for him. "I ses to 'im very mysterious, 'alf whisperin': 'Ow much could yer do wiv, if I could get some for yer? Now, don't be too greedy, but say as little as possible,' I ses, as if the job was goin' to be a difficult one.

'Any quantity,' 'e ses, eager, and tumblin' into the trap as easy as a countryman in London for the first time.

'If I could get some very delicate flavoured tea at a low price, what would yer say?' I ses, lurin' 'im on.

'I should say you're a blessin' in disguise, David,' 'e ses, 'is feelin's gettin' the better of 'im.

'Could yer take a 'underdweight?' I asks.

'Yes, and more too, if you can get it,' 'e ses.

'What can yer pay for it?' I went on, lookin' at 'im independent like.

'E got so excited at 'is prospects, 'e took some cigars from the wrong box, and gave me three of 'em. Real 'Avanas, they was, the kind 'e smokes 'imself, not the sort 'e gives away, usual; like I've give you sometimes," Isaacs said, reminding me of unpleasant moments.

"The memory of them will abide with me till my old age," I said.

"That's right, you understand what's good," he said. Getting on with his story, he continued:

"Of course when it comes to the question of price the trouble begun. I asked 'im two and four a pound; he offered two bob. At the finish we split the difference, makin' it two and two, delivered at 'is warehouse.

'Write yer order out,' I ses. 'Mind, I don't guarantee whether it comes from India or China or Japan; or whether it's mixed, or what it is. Whether it comes in a sack, a chest, or a box. Understand?'

So 'e wrote the order as I told 'im, for one 'underdweight o' tea, more or less, either India or China or Japan, or mixed, at two and two a pound, to be delivered to 'im at 'is address.

I took a bit o' paper and worked out what it come to.

'That'll be twelve pound two and eight,' I ses, expectin' 'im to pay out the money. After 'e'd reckoned it up, 'e ses, 'That's right, and I'll give yer the cheque on delivery.'

That didn't suit me at all. 'It must be cash wiv order,' I ses. 'Them's the terms I 'ave to pay.'

'I never pay for anythink till it's delivered,' 'e ses, very firm.

'Then you'll never get the tea,' I ses. 'These ain't usual days, remember. I thought I was doin' you a turn. But it don't matter. Other people'll be glad enough to get 'old of it, seein' the awful shortage.'

Then we 'aggles again for 'alf an hour, till, at last, 'e gave me a cheque for twelve quid, me givin' 'im the two and eight as discount."

"And did he obtain the tea, after all?" I asked.

"Course 'e did," Isaacs answered, as if I had cast a doubt on his bonafides. "I went to a friend o' mine who's manager for one o' the big tea and bun shops, and asked 'im if 'e'd got any tea to sell.

'Do yer want a fine line o' tea leaves? that's all I got to sell,' 'e ses, larfin'.

'Ow much 'ave yer got?' I asks.

'Are you jokin'?' 'e ses, gettin' ready to give me a funny answer back.

'No, straight,' I ses, lettin' 'im see I was serious.

'What d'yer want it for?' 'e asks, not satisfied I wasn't pullin' is leg.

'It's for—it's for—I got a contract wiv a firm what make some new sort o' carpet cleaner. Only it must be dry; I want a 'underdweight as a sample, and can pay for it 'andsome,' I ses.

'What's 'andsome?' 'e asks, eyein' me to see what I meant.

'A one-pound note if it's packed in a box after it's been well dried, and marked on the outside "Extra dry China," and ready for me in four days,' I ses, gettin' the money out o' my pocket.

'I'll do it,' 'e ses, takin' the cash. 'And if you want any more at the price I think I can oblige.' "

"Have you seen Mr. Steinervitz since you delivered it?" I asked Isaacs, amused at his effrontery.

"I didn't 'ave any business in 'is quarter for a few days," he replied, "but one day, I met a friend of 'is named Bergmann.

'Ullo, Isaacs,' 'e ses, shakin' 'ands very friendly. 'Ow's the tea trade?

'Can't get any more, I'm sorry to say, if that's

what you're after,' I ses, guessin' that Steinervitz 'ad told 'im of the deal.

'That's a pity,' 'e ses, lookin' sad. 'I was 'opin' I might get a parcel of it. Not that I use much. Only Steinervitz said it's the finest tea 'e's ever tasted, and the factory 'ands simply love it.'

'Are you kiddin'?' I asked 'im, not knowin' what to make of 'im. Only I could see by 'is face 'e wasn't.

'Kiddin'! No. Let me know when you've got any more, and save a little lot for me. I'll be much obliged.'

And 'e left me standin' there as silly as a new-born kitten.

When I come to my senses I walked by Steinervitz' place, and saw 'im standin' at the door.

'Ullo, Dave,' 'e ses, like as if I was 'is son-in-law, and as friendly as yer please. Goes on to say 'e can't ever thank me enough for gettin' 'im that lovely parcel o' tea; 'ow 'is missis was overjoyed, and 'ow it 'ad stopped a strike wiv 'is 'ands, who looked forward to tea-time, and worked so much better since I 'ad delivered it.

'And, Dave,' 'e ses, very earnest, as if 'e was goin' to cry, 'if ever I can do you a turn, I will, I promise yer. You deserve it, and you shall 'ave it. Don't forget, now. Give me the chance of doin' you a similar favour.'

'E gave me some more of the proper cigars, and when I was goin', 'e ses:

'Oh, by the by, you know Bergmann, don't yer?' I said I did.

'Well, I let 'im 'ave 'alf a pound for 'is missis, and I know 'e'd be glad to get a small parcel if there's any more to be 'ad.'



'Why, I met 'im a few minutes ago,' I ses.

'Well, didn't 'e mention it?' 'e asks, surprised.

'Yes, 'e did,' I ses, kickin' myself, I'd said I couldn't get any more.

'Go and see 'im,' 'e ses, 'and if you can let 'im 'ave ten or a dozen pounds, 'e'd take it kindly.'

'I'll try,' I ses, makin' it out a favour.

'Good boy,' 'e ses, shakin' me by the 'and as if I'd saved 'is life.

I was round at Bergmann's quicker than it takes a dog to get out of a butcher's shop, and when the boy showed me in to 'is private orfice, 'e was examin'in' a boot.

'I've come to see yer about that tea,' I ses, 'as I find I can get a little more, after all. 'Ow much do you want?' I asks, 'opin' 'e could do wiv a 'underweight.

'Oh, not more than a dozen pounds,' 'e replies. 'You see, I only want it for 'ome, me not 'avin' any 'ands like Steinervitz.'

'I couldn't do yer a dozen pounds at less than two and six,' I ses, disappointed at the smallness of the order.

'I'm much obliged to yer,' 'e ses, and passes me over thirty bob at once.

Cockin' my eye at the boot, I asked 'im if 'e'd gone into the boot trade.

'That's an army boot,' 'e ses, pickin' it up and examin'in' it close as 'e turned it over and over. 'What would you say that boot's worth, David?' 'e asks me. 'You're a good judge o' most things,' 'e ses.

I looked it all over very careful, and saw it couldn't be worth less than a pound a pair, the

leather was so 'eavy and the make so good, bein' all 'and sewn. I gave 'im my opinion.

'What would you say, David, if I told you I can get five 'underd pair at seven and six a pair?'

'I should say that if you didn't buy 'em at that price, you ought to be chained up; you ain't fit to be let loose,' I ses, wild that the business 'adn't come my way, instead of 'is.

'Well,' 'e ses, I'm goin' to let you into a secret. Steinervitz and me are buyin' 'em on joint account. And,' 'e ses, gentle like, 'you've been so nice about the tea, you can come into it wiv us if yer like, and your share of the boots shall be sent to you wherever you like. Only it's a cash transaction, like everything these days. Cash down's the game, my boy; cash with the order does the trick every time, if you want to buy cheap,' 'e ses, pattin' me on the shoulder.

It was like pickin' up money to buy them boots at three 'alf-crowns a pair, and I asked 'im quick 'ow many I could 'ave.

'You can 'ave,' 'e ses, thinkin' a moment, 'you can 'ave, say, two 'underd and fifty pair, ninety pounds worth. I'll take the risk o' Steinervitz agreein'. Will that satisfy yer?'

'Rather,' I ses, jumpin' at the chance. 'When d'you want the cash?'

'Not later than to-morrow,' 'e ses, 'cause the deal 'as got to be settled by then.'

'I'll be 'ere sharp to time,' I ses, and bolted off to get the money ready, and larfin' as I went, thinkin' 'ow my little deal in tea was goin' to make me at least a 'underd and fifty pounds rivach (profit).

Next mornin' I was at 'is place on the tick o' ten, not wantin' to give 'im a chance to change 'is mind. Not that 'e wanted to. All 'e did was to take the money and give me a receipt for it to keep things in proper order. I told 'im to send the boots round to my old man's place when they was ready, and begun to think where I should sell 'em.

When I told my father what a deal I'd made, 'e wanted to come in as a pardner, and offered me the money.

'Not likely,' I ses. 'You stick to yer clothin'; boots ain't in your line.' And the more 'e begged the more I wasn't takin' 'im in, seein' I was on velvet.

One mornin' I went round to 'is 'ouse, and there, outside the door, was some cases, marked on the outside:

### ARMY BOOTS

#### ASSORTED SIZES—MADE FOR HEAVY WEAR.

I got a hammer and a chisel and 'ad the lid off one o' the cases in no time. Then I saw 'ow Steinervitz and Bergmann 'ad laid a trap to get even wiv me over the tea. They was army boots alright, but such boots! They was what 'ad been collected off the fields o' France, and I found out afterwards they was sent 'ome to be sold for what they'd fetch instead o' layin' out there and rottin' in the weather. The soles was worn through, and the treads was split across. And the colour! They looked like a lot of extra large pertaters all out o' shape, wiv the mud on 'em dried a dirty grey in the sun.

When my old man saw 'em, 'e looked at me very odd like, and said, 'It vas a pity you didn't let yer old fader into der deal, David. Dey look so cheap at seven and six a pair.'

I'd a-knocked 'im down if 'e 'adn't a-been who 'e is, I was so wild at bein' done by those two swindlers!

I was just off to Bergmann to demand my money back, or threaten 'im wiv the law, when the post-man come up wiv a letter which 'e 'ands to my father.

'It's for you, David,' the old man ses, passin' it over to me. And when I opens it I saw it was from Steinervitz, and all it said was: 'Dear David, This is to 'ope you'll like the boot deal as much as Bergmann and me liked the tea. If you want any more, I won't promise, but I'll try and let you 'ave 'em.'

Then I saw the artfulness o' Steinervitz givin' me 'is thanks and cigars, and 'ow 'e 'ad put up Bergmann to order more tea to throw dust into my eyes. I remembered that Bergmann 'ad only said when I asked 'im what the sample boot was, that it was an army boot; 'e didn't say them I was buyin' was new. I was 'ad, no doubt of it, but I don't mean to rest till I get square on 'em some'ow or another, not if it takes me a year to do it."

I told him I thought he would have some difficulty as they would be sure to be on their guard.

"Rather! That's why it'll be worth while. They larf last—who larf last," he said.

Then catching sight of some one he knew on the other side, he called out, "'Arf a mo', Woolf!" and darted across the road.

## CHAPTER XX

### ISAACS IN LOVE

**I**SAACS came into my office in a debonnair mood, indulging in the unusual practice of whistling. The melody was "You Made Me Love You."

"It is not customary to enter the office of a solicitor whistling, Mr. Isaacs," I said.

"'Tain't a church, is it? Or a synagogue? What's wrong wiv whistling, when you're 'appy? When yer 'eart feels as light as a toy balloon? I've come on pleasure, and feelin' as I do, I'm willin' to pay yer to listen to me. Can yer want anythink fairer than that?"

Then, with an exaltation of spirits rare in him, he burst forth:

"I've seen 'er! What do yer think o' that? Seen 'er and she was—was—— Now's the time I wish I was a poet, because I ain't got no words. Fancy that! Isaacs short o' words! Silly, I call it."

"May I ask whom you have seen?" I enquired, puzzled at this unaccustomed vein in which he was talking. "I don't wish to appear inquisitive, but if you have come to consult me, I must ask for full particulars," I said. I wished his story to be consecutive.

His eyes wore an expression altogether less wily than usual.

"I ain't come to *consult* yer about 'er," he said. "I've come to *talk* about 'er, 'cause you're the

only one who understands me, see? 'Er name!" he continued. "What d'yer think it is? Guess a thousand times, and you'll be wrong. Oh, it's a lovely one. It rhymes wiv Truth. 'Ere, listen to this. I wrote it last night."

He pulled from his pocket a scrap of paper from which he read:

"I need not go to General Booth  
To learn what is the simple truth;  
Not me ! Why should I, when there's Ruth ?"

His eyes sought praise from me for the composition.

"Then 'Ruth' is the lady's name," I said.

"Ain't it a lovely one? Sort o' name that reminds me o' new 'ay," he said, as if he adored the country.

"Ever seen it growing?" I asked.

The question brought him up with a turn.

"If yer put it that way . . . no, I ain't. Never been in the country; no business there. Ask me where you can pick up a line o' second-'and silk goods, or some job saddlery, and I'll keep step. But, 'ay! It's only good for 'orses."

He swung round in his chair as if he were turning away from a useless and unpleasant-looking article.

"Well, what made you think of it, then?" I persisted.

"I've smelt it in the carts as they come down the Bow Road to Whitechapel, and it makes my mouth water. That's why I think of it and Ruth together," he answered in a placid voice.

"A very good reason, too," I said encouragingly,

feeling this mood of his was to be nursed. "If the lady can inspire you to verse, there's no telling what height you may reach under her guidance," I added.

"'Ere, I've thought of another verse while you've been gabbin' away. Listen:

' And if you see before you a youth,  
Who ain't very well bred, and is rather uncouth,  
There's only one person can alter 'im,—Ruth.'

Lord! I am risin' in the poetry market; I shall be at a premium soon. I must write 'em out proper, and send 'em to 'er. She'll see I'm not the dunce she thinks I am!" he said, unaware of his faults in scansion.

"But surely she has not expressed such an opinion!" I said.

"Not 'er! She's much too polite. Only if I can see the difference 'tween 'er and me, 'ow much more can she see it?" he replied, with unusual modesty.

"What is the lady's surname?" I queried.

"Ruth Strelinski," he said with pride.

"And where did you meet her?" I asked, becoming interested in what promised to be the commencement of a romance.

"I 'ad to go to Maida Vale, and run right into 'er. I spotted 'er before she did me, and was goin' to pass as if I didn't know 'er, but she saw me and smiled, sayin', 'Why, Mr. David!' (it's so funny to be called 'Mister') 'I am glad to meet you. I've wanted to, ever so, but I could never find your address.' "

"Then you've known her some time?" I asked.

"Rather," he said, as if surprised at my ignorance. "Don't yer remember the raffle I got up for one of 'er pictures?"

"Oh, that's the lady. Yes, I recollect it quite well," I said.

"There you are then. Made me walk wiv 'er. I wanted a lot o' makin'—I don't think. Told me the money was sufficient to start in the West End where she 'ad taken a studio wiv a friend of 'ers. She said 'I'm as 'appy as a bee among flowers, and it's all due to you. Am I not lucky to 'ave met you, Mr. David?' she asks. That made me laugh; the idea of 'er bein' lucky to meet me, fair tickled me."

This was to me a new Isaacs. He was obviously in love. It was clearly no vulgar flirtatious affair; I knew his character sufficiently to see when he was in earnest.

I saw exhilaration on his features; he had the appearance of a man who had found his soul, and, as a result, the wrinkles on his forehead seemed less defined.

"Well?" I said, to give him the chance of still further unburdening himself.

"Well, what?" he returned, looking at me good temperedly.

"Is that all?" I asked.

"All! rather not. While we was walkin' I found out she knew Mrs. Schwartz, who's a friend o' mine. She's goin' to 'er silver weddin' celebration," he said in a happy tone, and added, light-heartedly, "and I'm goin' too, so I shall see 'er again, soon." Then, as if struck with a happy thought, he added, "And you're comin' too."



"Whatever for?" I asked, thinking, perhaps, he was joking; but in case he was serious, I said: "People don't want to receive strangers at their silver wedding."

"Not ordinary, they don't," he replied. "But this ain't ordinary; it's important—to me. I want you to meet 'er, see? Also I want 'er to meet you, so's she'll see I've got some good-class friends."

Isaacs has strange ideas as to the functions of a solicitor. I sometimes think that he has a genuine regard for me quite outside our professional relations.

At first I declined, but he was so sincere and earnest, I agreed, on the condition that I received a formal invitation.

How he managed it, I could not conceive, but a few days after, the invitation came in proper form, and I went to the house.

The celebrants of their silver wedding were a picturesque old couple; of the two, Mrs. Schwartz was, perhaps, the more distinguished looking. Her gown of soft black material contrasted admirably with her white waving hair, and her features showed that in her youth she must have been a beautiful type of her race. Age, in the case of Mr. Schwartz, had helped him by softening features which in his early days must have been hard and relentless; now, they had become more compassionate, and were assisted by his plentiful white hair.

Seated in two armchairs at the far-end of the room in which their guests were arriving, they made a graceful picture, and had a pleasant word for all comers.

I picked out Miss Strelinski long before Isaacs led me up to her, and I saw at once that he had not exaggerated her beauty.

She was a blend of East and West. Her skin was almost Italian in colour, with a profusion of blue-black hair of a texture much finer than is customarily found in her race, while her mouth, nose and lips might have been chiselled by a sculptor. But the outstanding feature of her face was her eyes; the lustrous depths of them seemed unfathomable; without doubt, the eyes of a poet, a dreamer, displaying a nature that could easily weep with emotion; a creature to be treated with the same tenderness as a flower. That was the Eastern part of her; the West was exhibited in her general demeanour; her poise, ease of speech, frankness, self-reliance, all contributed to make a delightful girl.

Isaacs, I thought, was aiming high, and if he won. . . . I wondered if it were possible that so unrefined a person could gain the affections of so delicate and cultured a mentality. Before this could happen some of the baser metal of his nature would have to be refined away, leaving him a more suitable mate than he was at present.

“‘Ere you are, Miss Ruth,” he said as he introduced me. “‘Ere’s the only man I’ve ever paid money to wivout getting goods, or somethink, to the value of it. ‘E’s my solicitor,” he added, by way of explaining his joke.

Miss Strelinski laughed as she asked me: “Is that true?”

“I can only say Mr. Isaacs has always paid my account without grumbling until this moment,” I responded, with a smile.

"That's because I always part up in your office when I'm alone," he said. Then, as if complaining, he continued: "I never can see 'ow a lawyer 'as any right to send in a bill at all; all 'e sells is talk, wiv a letter thrown in, sometimes, as make-weight."

Without waiting for a reply, he darted off to another part of the room to speak to some young men who had just arrived. From where I was standing I could hear there was an argument going on, in which the words "money" and "rivach" were distinctly audible.

Miss Strelinski also noticed it, remarking that it seemed odd to her that on an occasion like this, business should be a topic of discussion.

"It's a trait of the race," I said, "and has probably given rise to the phrase 'rich as a Jew.' "

"An absurd saying," she commented, "and only possible among people ignorant of their condition as a whole. The East End supplies the answer. And if further argument were needed, look at those two old men who have just entered the room; they are called 'Schnurrers' (beggars)."

I followed the direction of her eyes, and saw two bent-backed, grey-whiskered old men whose clothes were obviously "cast-offs"; they both wore frock-coats which were somewhat shiny in appearance, and in one case, the sleeves were much too long, while in the other, the shoulder seam came too low down the arm.

"There are two poor men, broken in the fight for existence, too old for work, and dependent upon the alms of their better-off neighbours," she explained.

"But, if they are beggars, what are they doing here?" I asked.

She regarded them with a kindly expression as she answered: "Oh, they are old friends; Mr. Schwartz knew them in the days of their prosperity, and no doubt, with a number of others, subscribes a weekly sum to keep them in comparative comfort. You know, a Jew hates the idea of going into a poor-house; the independence of the race is all against such a thing."

I did not know, but I rather admired the sentiment.

"So," she went on, "since they are schnurrers through no fault of their own, they are invited here on terms of perfect equality. Of course, there are professional schnurrers, as with all races. These practise upon the Jewish belief that the Messiah may make His appearance in the garb of a beggar or a prince; so a beggar is never turned away without alms, in case it might be the Messiah Who has been a Visitor."

As she finished speaking an elderly man entered.

"I wonder who that is," she said. "I thought I knew most of the people who are expected to-night."

The words had hardly left her lips when Isaacs went forward rapidly towards the man, and I heard him say, "This way, father; I want to inter-dooce yer to my friends."

Mr. Isaacs, senior, followed his son to where we were sitting. A rather short man with grizzly grey whiskers, and a bald head partly covered with long strands of hair. These started above one ear, and travelling over a large expanse of cranium, finished their smooth journey at the other.

“‘Ere’s my father, Miss Ruth,” Isaacs said to Miss Strelinski by way of introduction. “Come to get a free feed, like me,” he added, as Mr. Isaacs, senior, shook hands with her.

The old man took his son’s remark quite seriously.

“Vat is dat you say, David?” he asked, looking at Isaacs and reproving him. “Am I a schnurrer dat I must ask for bread? Or am I a respectable man in der wholesale tailorin’? Wholesale, mind you,” he went on, embracing us all in his talk, and implying by the emphasis he laid on the word a definite status of importance. He sat still a moment, pondering his son’s affront.

“Should I be ‘ere only to eat and drink? Me? Didn’t I lend Schwartz der first monies to get ‘imself started in der trade? Years ago? Ven ‘is ‘air and mine vas as black as der ‘eart of a Russian landowner?” he said, smoothing his hand over the strands of his hair, and trying by judicious fingering, to cover the bare streaks.

Talking to Miss Strelinski, Isaacs was utterly indifferent to these reminiscences. His father, catching my eye, asked me:

“‘Ave you got any children, sir?”

I said I was not married.

“Ah,” he said, “you vas lucky. Dey brings der trouble and der expenses vit ‘em. And ven dey grow up, if dey’re girls, dey marry—or you ‘ope dey vill; if they don’t, it’s still more troubles, ‘cause you don’t get ‘em off your ‘ands. If dey’re boys, dey go giddy-gaddin’ about, and you vonder vat is der tricks dey’re up to. Like ‘im,” he said, looking at his son, and speaking as if he were out

of hearing. "'E wouldn't stop in my business . . . 'e might 'ave been a good cutter by now. No, 'e goes off on 'is own, and vat 'e does, goodness knows. Deals in dis, deals in dat, so 'e says: always vit der money in der pocket, but vere 'e gets it from——"

His words trailed off into silence, as if he were fearful of saying too much. His son, who couldn't help hearing his father's reverie, thought it time to break into the conversation.

"'Ow's yer appetite, Dad?" he asked. His father brightened up a little at the question.

"Not so bad—not so bad, tenk Gawd. Ven der food's vaitin' for me, I'm vaitin' for it, usual," he replied, as he smiled a little smile of contentment, having, seemingly, forgotten any soreness he felt against David. Then he continued: "Ven you've got der appetite, it's good to 'ave der food ready, too. Not like at Kiew, where I lived. . . ."

Miss Strelinski, being interested to hear what the old man was saying, signed to Isaacs to be silent.

"Was that the town you were born in?" she asked.

"Kiew, in Russia," he answered, looking at her. "My fader was in der boot-makin' and repairin', and often ve didn't get paid for the goods, so ve vas always poor. Ve vas only Jews, so ve could go without der cash.

Ven I vas a little boy, I remembered, my fader sent me vit twelve pairs of boots vat 'e'd repaired, and ven der servant took der bill to der master of der 'ouse, 'e come to der door vit a vip and vipped me over der back and legs, till I cried vit der pain. Ven I asked 'im vat 'e vip me for, 'e

says, 'Dat vill teach a rascally Jew to ask for der payment!' And my mudder vas vaitin' for der cash to buy der food for der Shobos!'

"How dreadful!" Miss Strelinski exclaimed, her beautiful eyes showing signs of tears. "And what did your mother do, then?" she asked.

"My fader got a little money from a friend," he answered. "But ven 'e come 'ome, 'e swore to 'ave der revenge in der Court. Vich vas a foolishness, but 'e vas so vild dat I vas made to cry vit der pain, and at der tears of my mudder. All der same it vas der foolishness, 'cause der judge gave 'im a veek in der prison for der insult 'e'd made to der customer, who told a book of lies in der vitniss box."

The old man's face was tense and drawn, and though his voice had not been raised, there was in it a concentrated feeling of hate which showed that though many years had passed, the injustice to his father was still fresh in his mind.

"Dat's vy my fader said to me ven it vas near der time for me to go into der army, 'Moshé,' 'e ses, 'don't stay in a country vere dere ain't no justice for der Jew; go to England vere is der freedom. Me and your mudder vas too old to travel and make der changes, but for you it is better and though to part vit you vill make der rest of our days a sadness'"—the old man's eyes took on a miserable look as he unconsciously imitated his father—" 'still it's better,' 'e said. So I come 'ere and my life vas saved, for two years after my fader and mudder vas bot' killed in der Pogrom."

We all sat still; the old man's recital of his

history left us dumb. Even his son said nothing as he gazed at Ruth Strelinski, whose eyes were now full. As she wiped the tears away, they seemed to be looking far off; into the heart of Russia, where she saw her co-religionists herded in a Ghetto, the everlasting fear of slaughter before them; where the word "justice" is a cruel and cynical travesty. She startled those around her by exclaiming: "God! To think that my people should have meted out to them such barbarities!" Then, seeing the futility of reviling her people's persecutors, she said more calmly: "And, oh! how thankful we should be, those of us who live in England!"

Mr. Isaacs, having recovered his peaceful frame of mind, answered her: "Dat's true, miss. Only der Jew from Russia knows vat it means to be able to go to der bed at night and not 'ave to vorry vedder 'e'll be alive in der mornin'." He turned to his son. "You, David, vill never know vat it is; you, who vas born in dis country, and——"

"I wasn't born 'ere; I'm Russian, and don't you forget it," Isaacs replied suggestively.

His father regarded him wistfully for a moment: then, a past episode connected with the question of the army coming into his mind, he said: "No, no, you vas English, all right. If ever I said you vas Russian, it vas for your good, your good." Then he exposed the incident which had given rise to the falsehood by saying, "Besides, you wasn't strong enough for a soldier; der only t'ing you're strong in, is der tongue. Better at der talkin' dan der fightin'." He smiled his sad little smile once more, as he looked at us all for approval of his harmless joke.



The presence of Miss Strelinski had a restraining influence on Isaacs; he attempted no repartee in reply. It was left to her to take up the cudgels on his behalf.

"Ah, that he certainly can do," she said in a convincing manner. "As I have good reason to know. I shall never forget how his tongue made me a fortune at a time. . . . Over a hundred and fifty pounds——"

"'Ow much!" Mr. Isaacs ejaculated, looking at her with astonishment. She repeated the amount.

"And 'ow much did 'e make out of it?" he asked, very naturally, I thought.

"Not a penny piece," she replied, her eyes full of gratitude.

"And do you believe dat?" he asked incredulously.

"I know it!" she answered, a note of challenge in her voice.

Mr. Isaacs looked at her with admiration for the way she championed his son, as he replied almost sorrowfully: "Den, my dear young lady, you don't know David. I vish I could believe it, too."

"I believe it, too, Mr. Isaacs," I said, anxious that the son should have justice from his father.

"Ah, vell," he said, but little convinced. "It's different to some of der t'ings I've 'eard about 'im, dat's all."

At this point we were summoned to the dining-room, and I was flattered that Miss Strelinski should appoint me her escort. Isaacs hurried ahead of us for the purpose, as I found a minute later, of securing three seats. By this he was able

to sit beside her, and she laughed as he said: "I don't get people invitations to swell dinners for them to steal my—friends away from me. Not much."

During dinner, Miss Strelinski reverted to the old man's story of his father and mother.

"Did you notice the note of sadness in his conversation?" she asked me.

I reminded her that the story he had told us was a very sad one.

"Oh, it isn't that I mean," she said. "I find the minds of all these Russians are set in a minor key; fun and humour seem to have been squeezed from their minds by the misery they have suffered for generations. They remind me of the slot machine which returns the penny if it isn't working; the happy side of the Russian is never working—it is only the unhappy side which responds to the coin of social intercourse."

"I've never 'eard my father laugh real 'earty in 'is life," Isaacs said. "Why, I took 'im one night to a music 'all and 'e sat there as glum as a furrier who's sold a mink collar at the price o' cat. And when the comedians was funniest, 'e asks me, 'What are der peoples laughin' at, David? Vas it because der man 'as der red nose, or 'vy?' Wastin' good money takin' 'im out, wasn't it?"

It was a merry party; a spirit of happiness pervaded old and young; all seemed bent on making the evening go with a "bang," and none entered into the fun more than Mr. and Mrs. Schwartz, tears of laughter filling the eyes of the former when Mr. Isaacs, senior, in a speech of congratulation, turned round to the mantelpiece for the silver

flower bowl he was to present on behalf of the assembled company, and found it had disappeared.

This dislocated his peroration; the handing of the bowl was to have been the crowning point of his speech. He knew it was there when he sat down to dinner, having carefully observed it, and now——

“Vere vas dat flower bowl?” he asked pathetically.

“Perhaps you’ve put it in your vest pocket,” one of the young Schwartz’s suggested playfully.

Subconsciously, his hand went there, unmindful of the absurdity; he agitated his whiskers while he wondered what could have become of it; he looked at Schwartz almost with dismay in his eyes.

“Never mind der bowl, Moshé; it’ll turn up all right,” Schwartz said. “Get on mit der speech, ’cause der young folks vish to get to der dancin’.”

“Hear! Hear!” chorussed the boys and girls.

“Vell, I try,” said Mr. Isaacs. But the spell of inspiration was broken, and he finished lamely by saying: “I vish you all you vish yourselves,” and sat down, still worrying over the lost bowl.

“Why, here it is under the table, I think,” a youth said, pulling something towards him with his foot and lifting it up.

“Vy, ’ow did it get dere?” Mr. Isaacs asked, astonished. He took it from the young man and passed it to Mrs. Schwartz, who thanked him with her eyes, not daring to tell him of the practical joke played on him by the youngsters.

“Well, now you’ve seen the Jews at home, what do you think of them?” Miss Strelinski asked me as I was on the point of leaving.

"I think they are like the rest of humanity," I replied. "Capable of laughter and tears."

"Especially tears," she said. "For tears have been their lot through the centuries." Then turning to Isaacs, she said: "And now, Mr. David, you have to take me all the way to Maida Vale."

"No one else is goin' to, 'cept over my dead body," he answered.

And I left him happy in the knowledge that he was to be with her for at least an hour.

## CHAPTER XXI

### RUTH

**A** LADY to see you, sir," the office boy said, handing me a card on which was inscribed, "Miss Ruth Strelinski."

"Show her in," I said, glad to have the chance of renewing the lady's acquaintance.

In a dark costume, a toque, slightly tilted, on her head, and a white fur boa round her neck, Miss Strelinski looked charming as she entered the room. She told me she had come to see me about Isaacs.

"Not in any trouble, I hope?" I asked, fearing something might have happened to him in connection with one of his "business" schemes. It was therefore a relief, in one sense, when she said he had been very ill with pneumonia, but was now on the high road to recovery, and wished to see me.

"Apart from being sorry for him," she said, "it was a great disappointment that he was prevented from seeing the exhibition of my pictures; an exhibition made possible through his action some time ago in getting me a lot of money by means of a raffle. Also he would have seen his portrait on the walls."

"Is it over?" I asked, feeling that I should like to see them, after what Isaacs had told me about the "daubs" as he called them.

"Yes, it finished last Saturday," she replied. "I have read him some of the Press notices. One

especially pleased him, because it referred to his portrait, about which he made a lot of absurd remarks."

"He says some amusing things, sometimes," I said.

"He does, indeed. Why, once, while he was sitting to me, he said he never expected to see a portrait of himself except at Madame Tussaud's or Scotland Yard; even then, he didn't think he would actually see them; he would only *know* they would be there. I'm sure he makes himself out to be a great deal worse than he is, don't you?" she asked, with, I thought, a certain wistfulness in her voice.

"I think he says things to amuse you," I hedged.

"Not, mind you, that I think all his transactions have been strictly honourable," she said, criticising him with a delightful innocence.

I said it would not be fair to expect the same code of honour in a lad born in the East End of London as would be looked for in, say, an Eton boy.

"David tells me he has known you quite a long time," she went on with a charming smile, "and, I know, he likes you very much."

"That is fortunate for me," I replied, "because clients, sometimes, don't think well of their professional advisers."

"You would be amused to hear him speaking of you. He gave me two reasons for liking you: one is, he always remembers the result of the first case with which he entrusted you, but wouldn't say what it was; the second is that you don't overcharge him."

We both laughed.

"But," she continued with a grave face, "he says he will never make you a good business man. And talking of business, did he ever tell you how he raffled a picture for me once? The one I was speakin of a moment ago?"

I nodded.

"That act showed me his real character, and I shall never forget it, I assure you. I was literally starving when he got me all that money; therefore it is not to be wondered that I take an interest in him, is it?"

"Indeed, no," I said earnestly, adding, "and if I may say so, I have noticed a change in him since he met you. So much so, I believe you have inspired in him a great ambition, only he has not confided the nature of it to me. He will, one day, perhaps."

After more conversation on the subject of Isaacs, she gave me the address of the home where he was staying, to which she had insisted on his being removed from his father's house in the early days of his illness.

On the day I called, I found him in a light and airy room, sitting up in bed with a dressing-gown on. To this latter he drew my attention immediately I entered.

"No, I ain't dressed up for a Fancy Dress Ball," he said, seeing I had noticed it. "I got to wear it, 'cause it's suitable for what Miss Ruth calls 'dish-a-bill,' though whether that's an insult or a complaint, I don't rightly know. See the silk cord? *And* the tossles? I reckon that all I want to make a cigarette picture, is a red 'at. Shockin' waste o'

money, I call it, don't you?" he asked, as he fingered the fleecy material of which the dressing-gown was composed.

Except for a certain pallor on his face, the vigour of his speech made it difficult to believe he had been seriously ill.

"Now take it gently, Isaacs," I commenced, anxious that he should not unduly exert himself. "Don't talk too much——"

"Talk!" he exclaimed. "Some one's got to talk! If I waited for you to say somethink, we should soon only be fit for a thinkin' part in a pantomime! I believe you lawyers don't say much in case you give seven words for a tanner, instead o' five. 'Ow are yer?" he asked, as brightly as if he were quite strong, and without waiting for a reply, he said: "I'm gettin' on fine. Been pretty rotten, though. One time, I thought the curtain was ringin' down; couldn't take a deeper breath than a sparrow." For a moment his voice gave the semblance of a quaver.

"How long have you been in the home?" I asked. He ignored the question to indulge his love for assuming a sense of injury.

"'Ome!" he said disdainfully. "'This ain't a 'ome! It's a mixture of 'orspital and prison. There's enough rules and regulations in this place to run a work'ouse. At seven, you're washed; seven-thirty, breakfast; eight, yer medicine 'as to be swallowed; at ten-thirty, bed made; eleven, hair brushed and teeth cleaned; twelve, the doctor; one, lunch; two, more medicine; three—well, there's somethink to worry yer every blessed minute o' the day till nine a'clock when they, what they call,



'settle' yer for the night. I tell yer straight, a few more weeks o' this, and I shall be 'settled' all right for ever and for ever, as the song says."

"It's that very regularity which helps the cure," I said consolingly. It had no effect, however, for he went on:

"I've been layin'——"

"Lying," I corrected, and was immediately sorry.

"'Lyin'!" he said as if I had doubted him. "I'm tellin' yer the Gawd's truth! I've been layin' 'ere for weeks under rules and regulations, Acts o' Parliament, byelaws, anceterer, until I'm fed up. It only wants a warder to complete the picture.

And the slops they give yer! I've asked over and over again for a steak and kidney pudden—anythink wiv a flavour in it—and they will keep givin' me patent food wiv milk. Milk! Who wants milk! Milk's all right wiv a drop o' rum in it, but when it's thickened up wiv arrowroot, I feel I'm swallerin' bill-sticker's paste all day long. Shove a poster down my throat and yer won't want no brush, believe me—it'll stick fine wiv what it finds waitin' for it."

He lay back on the pillow, somewhat out of breath with the excitement engendered by his outburst; then looked round quickly as the door opened, and a voice outside announced: "Mr. Isaacs!"

I rose as Isaacs, forgetting that I had already met Mr. Isaacs Senior, introduced me as "his solicitor." The old gentleman looked at his son sharply, and asked, "Vas you in trouble dat you vant a solicitor, David?"

"Of course not," Isaacs replied. Then with mock seriousness, he said: "Don't you know that lawyers are made to get yer *into* trouble, not out of it?"

"Den, vy do you engage 'im?" his father asked, ignoring me completely.

"Just to keep 'im out o' trouble and 'elp to pay 'is orfice rent," Isaacs answered jokingly. This was entirely lost on the old man, whose sense of fun, if he ever possessed it, had been blunted by years of toil and worry.

Pursuing his spirit of drollery Isaacs turned to his father and asked: "'Ave you put on yer Shobos clobber to visit me in the West, this bein' a State occasion? You ain't 'ad an invite as far as I know. And you *must* understand that I can't 'ave yer callin' on me just as yer like. Is trade so slack you can afford to leave business two days a week?"

"Trade's kviet, David; it's between der seasons," the old man replied, still taking his son seriously. Then the audacity of some of the questions dawned on him, and coming close to the bed, he demanded indignantly: "Vat 'ave I come for? Vat do you t'ink I've come for? To borrow money? Vat——!"

"'Ave yer got any to lend—that's the point," Isaacs interrupted, and looking at his father with a mock serious expression, he said: "If you've come to borrow, I must tell yer emphatic, the lendin' counter o' my bankin' establishment is closed for the day; we're only takin' in, not payin' out, 'cause the directors' fees are due, and they 'ave first call on the loose cash."

Mr. Isaacs Senior was still ruminating over the

indignity his son had put upon him. He turned to me, since it was useless to expect justice from his son, and said with emotion: "Vat 'ave I come for! Dere's a t'ing to say to a fader who comes to see his ill son! A nice t'ing, upon my vord! And it costs me, efery time I come—" he began to calculate, "dere's der bus from Mile End Road to Oxford Circus, fourpence; Oxford Circus to Maida Vale—it costs me each time I come 'ere, a shillin' der return, and 'e asks me vat 'ave I come for?" He regarded Isaacs with an eye of severe disapproval, as if nothing could ever make up for the unkindness of the question.

His harsh looks had no effect on Isaacs, however, for the young man went on: "If you've come to see if I'm gettin' value for my money in this 'orspital—I ain't." Then turning his back on his father, he asked me: "What do yer think they 'ave the sauce to charge for dosin' me wiv slops, wakin' me up just as I'm goin' to sleep, and washin' me when I ain't dirty?" I remained silent, aware that whatever guess I might make would make no difference to what he meant to say.

"Five guineas a week!" he said. "Guineas, mind yer, not pounds! To stop in this room! Medicine extra! They don't even throw that in. Doctor, too; he's an extra. Wish I'd been well enough when I come—they'd never 'ave got guineas out o' me, I give yer my word."

The old man, who had listened to this in a condition of ill-suppressed excitement, could no longer control himself.

"Fife guineas a week!" he said in tremulous tones, as he raised his hands to the level of his

forehead and waved them about palms upward. "Oy! oy! Fife guineas!" He addressed the room, an audience of two being too small to appreciate his indignation. "Did you efer 'ear such t'ings!" he said to the ceiling. "I must go and talk vit dem. It's a robbery; a schvindle! I go at vunce——" His look clearly implied fraud as he strode towards the door, eager to get at the ruffians who had decoyed his son into their clutches.

"You stay where you are, father!" Isaacs said, almost commandingly. "This ain't your affair. Wait till I get up; I'll let 'em know——"

"Vy did you leave 'ome?" his father wailed, shaking his head as if black ruin was before them through this catastrophe. "Vy did you leave 'ome? My doctor only makes der shillin' a visit and gives der medicine free." Then an idea struck him and he spoke with animation. "Or, I take you to der London 'Ospital; dats free, altogedder. Fife guineas! And ve t'ink der Goyim vas fools! I'd like to open a place at 'alf der price; I'd make der monies, der good monies. Fife guineas!" And he subsided, leaving the impression that the very fibres of his being had been shattered by such an outrage. A moment afterwards he rose to go, having looked at his watch to see the time.

"I'll be goin', David," he said. "I'll get 'ome before der sunset. Good day, sir," he added, looking at me. Then, the dominant thought in his mind being the outrageous charges made by the proprietors of the Home, he said to his son: "Vould you like me to speak to dem about der fife guineas, David? P'raps dey make a reduction, me bein' your fader. It's der most outrageousest t'ings I've——"

"Never you mind about that, father," Isaacs said, only to be interrupted in turn by his father.

"P'raps dis gentleman, bein' a lawyer, could make 'em der threat dat if dey don't reduce——"

"That's what 'e's 'ere for," Isaacs returned quickly.

This statement brightened up Mr. Isaacs considerably; only temporarily, though; for as he left the room I could hear him muttering distinctly: "Fife guineas—fife——"

When we were alone, Isaacs explained.

"Just said it to please 'im, 'cause if I 'adn't, 'e'd 'ave brooded over it for days. 'E's no good at business, really; like you. Why, 'e didn't even remember 'e'd met yer before. See 'is watch? I give it 'im. Got it on the cross, only don't ever tell Miss Ruth that, will yer? No more schlenter business for me; I'm reformed, now; I am, straight. She's done it. When I'm well, I'm goin' into some line where she can come and see what's goin' on, if she wants to. Then, some day, p'raps——"

The nurse entered, bringing something in a glass.

"'Ere she is again," Isaacs said, regarding her with simulated disdain. "More ink and water. I can't really drink that stuff unless yer bring me a large brandy and soda and a cigar; a 'Flor de Cuba,' none o' yer 'Flor de Sweepin's.'"

The nurse smiled at his mock abuse, which she quite understood and enjoyed. "You're getting on nicely, Mr. Isaacs," she said, "and I don't think you'll be here much longer."

"Do I go out feet or 'ead first?" he asked.

"You will leave on the perpendicular," she replied.

"That ain't a new kind o' motor car, is it? If so, order me two; one for rough wear, and one for Sundays. And mind and put my crest on it, like my friend Abe Saunders 'as on all 'is things."

"That's a new name to me, Isaacs," I said, thinking I knew most of his friends.

"Ain't yer met Abe?" he asked, surprised. "'Ot stuff is Abe. 'E's the gent who advertises 'e wants to do away wiv the 'igh rate of interest charged by some money-lenders. I should think 'e did; they ain't 'igh enough for 'im, as you'll know if you get into 'is 'ands, I promise yer.

When 'e moved from Canonbury to 'Ampstead 'e changed 'is name to De Courcy. I never knew it till I went up there to see 'im one night about interdoocin' a client. Lives in a fine 'ouse now; different to the one 'e was born in when 'is mother kept a fish stall in the Whitechapel Road. This one's decorated up like a Music 'All—all gilt and red.

'E ses it's a copy of the King's Palace, or the 'King's Arms'—I ain't sure which.

When I got inside the 'all, the first thing what caught my eye was a paintin' like yer see outside the pubs. I was lookin' at it when 'e come out of a room to ask me in.

'What's that?' I asks.

'My crest,' 'e ses, lookin' at me to see if I was surprised.

'What's a crest?' I asks, no wiser.

'I dunno,' 'e ses. 'They tell me the English gentry uses 'em, so I've 'ad one done. Like it?'

'If you ask me straight, I don't think it's as good as the one outside the "Cow and Ketchup" in the Globe Road. But what's it for?'

'Lord only knows!' 'e ses. 'I only know the stationer charges enough for 'em. I got it one day when I was orderin' some stationery, and the man asked me if I wanted my crest on. "Certainly," I ses to 'im, wantin' the best.

'What name?' 'e asks, and when I told 'im 'e said I belonged to the De Courcy's o' Durham and my crest was a wild boar.

When I asked 'im what it all meant, 'e told me they—meanin' the De Courcy's—was always a bit wild, and most of 'em was bores, so in my case the crest was, no doubt, all correct.

I didn't know what the devil 'e was talkin' about, but not likin' to let 'im know, I ordered a lot o' stationery wiv the picture printed on it in crimson, purple and gold. 'E said they must be the colours, 'cause the De Courcy's 'ad in their veins the blood of a former king o' France called 'Hongry Cat,' or some name like that.

I don't know to this day what 'e meant, and fancy it's a dodge to get money out o' what 'e called the 'Noovo Reach!' he ses, lookin' at me superior like.

'E showed me a signet ring on 'is finger wiv the boar's 'ead on it, too. Then 'e ses pleadin' like, 'And, Dave, that reminds me. Now I've changed my name, I don't want you to call me "Abe" any more, 'cause I'm De Courcy now, see?'

'Not "der Race Coursey,"' I ses, laughin'. He laughed too, only it looked more like the smile the animal on 'is crest 'd give yer if yer tried to take a bone away from it.

'What's the D.E. stand for?' I asks, always on the look out for information.

‘Don’t say I told yer,’ ’e ses, mysterious like. ‘The people who come to borrow money think it’s a French word; by the time I’ve finished wiv ’em, they know it means “Damned Expensive.” ’ And then ’e laughed proper.”

Having finished his yarn, Isaacs chaffed the nurse a little more until she left the room. Then becoming serious, he said: “Nice people, them nurses; always the same; kind and attentive. Lord! What good people there are in the world! Never gave it a thought till I met Ruth Strelinski, who brought me ’ere. And talkin’ o’ nurses, I want you to go and buy me a ring for that nurse what’s just gone out. One that’ll make ’er eyes look as dull as a second-’and ’ardware stall down Petticoat Lane. D’yer mind?”

“I will, certainly,” I replied, glad to see him recognize what the nurse had done for him.

“Get a ring wiv one stone in it—a diamond; somewhere about ’alf a carat. Go to Ebenstein’s on the Viaduct; they know me. Only mind, whatever they ask yer, beat ’em down——”

“Oh, I can’t do that, Isaacs, I really can’t. I’m not built that way,” I said, being aware of my limitations. The answer made him irritable, and he asked me snappishly:

“What way are yer built, I often wonder! ’Ow you Gentiles get on at all beats me! Yer can’t do this; yer won’t do that! What can yer do, then?”

Foolishly, I allowed the question to annoy me; I forgot that I should make allowance for his ignorance. I regarded him with anger as I replied: “If you thought a moment, you wouldn’t have



asked so stupid a question. Because your race possesses the instinct for trading, pray don't imagine others can do nothing worth doing. Have you heard of the steam-engine?" I asked, rather heatedly.

"Of course I 'ave," he replied with a gesture of contempt.

"Of the camera, of gas, electric light, telephones, wireless telegraphy, submarines, aeroplanes? Of the marvellous machinery used in their production. Did you ever hear of the Arkwright shuttle? Of everything that has made for the progress of the world, in fact? And has it ever struck you how little the Jew has done towards it all? Even in this country and France where he has had perfect freedom to develop his brain in whatever direction he pleases?" I finished, warm in my indignation that such wonders should not be recognised, even by so ignorant a person. My observations left him quite impassive and unconvinced.

"Our job's to buy and sell," he replied, thinking his answer completely satisfying. "That's where we come in. And so long as I can do a deal in 'em, I shan't lay awake, worrying 'cause I didn't invent 'em."

"Quite so," I said, determined to try and show him the limitations of his race. "But if the genius of the Gentile had not produced them, there would have been nothing for you to exploit," I reminded him. "Flying was made possible by Gentiles who took enormous risks—often fatal ones—in its development. I have not heard of any Jew who took these risks, nor have I heard of a Jew who has volunteered to go on any of the Polar expeditions.

Don't think that trading is everything; it isn't; it's only a part of the work necessary to civilisation, and with you or without you it would be carried on, be sure, by the Gentile."

Again I looked to see if my remarks had produced any effect, and again I saw I might have saved my breath.

"You ain't, by any chance, preparin' yerself for the lecture platform, are yer?" he asked, smiling as he chaffed me, "'cause if you are, save me a front seat for the first one, so's I can 'and up a bokay like you're slingin' at yerself, will yer?"

By this time I had recovered my equanimity.

"Quite right," I agreed. "Now, tell me, what do you want to see me about?"

"I want yer to look after my money affairs while I'm away," he said, in his direct way.

"Going away where? For how long?" I asked, very surprised at his news.

"P'raps six months, p'raps twelve; it all depends. Doctor's orders. Says I must, to get strong again. Weak chest. Got to give up business of every sort. I 'ate leavin' London now, since I've known—'er. I'd made all sorts o' plans—and now—they're all knocked on the 'ead. Goin' to South Africa. Dry, 'ot climate, there. She's promised to write every week——"

"Who has?" I asked, pretending ignorance.

"Ruth; I'm to write to 'er, too. Goin' to buy me a lot o' books to study, she says. Oh, I tell yer, she's lectured me proper, lately."

I was going to comment on the news he had given me, when Miss Strelinski herself walked in.

"I heard you chatterboxes half-way down the

stairs," she said, as she came in laughing. "How do you do, Mr. Smith? I've good news for you, David. The doctor says you may smoke two cigarettes a day—not more. So when you've given me your word of honour you'll keep to that number, I shall have the pleasure of handing you a packet of your favourites."

"Listen!" he said, his eyes gleaming with pleasure at the thought of being permitted to enjoy tobacco once more. "Pass me a fag for the sake of old times, and give me a match, please."

Miss Strelinski drew a cigarette from the packet, struck a match with which she lighted it for him, and for the first time that afternoon he was completely silent as he drew in the smoke, inhaling it with supreme enjoyment. When he had finished it he said, "We're talkin' business——"

"Oh, I'm so sorry," she said. "Would you like me to go?"

"No, please don't; I want you to 'ear it all," he replied.

He gave me instructions concerning the various "deals" in which he was interested; some "shady," some "straight"; I took notes of them, and, thinking he had finished, I was rising to go, when he said: "Lastly, there's my old father. I don't know whether 'e's a bloomin' millionaire, or whether 'e ain't worth the price of a red 'errin'—'e's so close about money. Anyway, tell 'im from me, you're good for two pounds a week if 'e wants it. 'E'll very likely tell yer you're insultin' 'im, also it's on the cards 'e'll say wiv tears in 'is eyes, that 'e always knew 'is son was a good boy. If 'e does, don't believe whichever 'e says, 'cause both'll be wrong.

Lastly, I want to make a will," he continued. "I 'ave to be careful in thinkin' this out," he said, looking at me artfully, as he handed me a piece of paper. "Read that," he added. The writing on it consisted of two lines which read: "If I die, the money is to go halves to my father, and halves to Miss Ruth Strelinski. David Ezekiel Isaacs."

"I don't like to hear you speaking of wills and dying, David, when we all know you're on the high road to recovery," Ruth said plaintively, while I was tying up my papers with the usual red tape.

"Talkin' o' dyin' won't make me die, any more than talkin' o' livin' won't keep me alive. Ain't that right?" he said, turning to me. I nodded assent.

"And now I'll be off," I said. "You're sure there's nothing more I can do for you?"

"Nothink else," he answered. "Except, I shouldn't be surprised if you pinched the lot."

I was just quick enough to see him wink at Miss Strelinski as I left the room.

THE END

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